

City of Northampton Public Health Notice

Mosquitoes Collected from a Northampton Health Department Project turning up positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) Virus.

DATE: August 1, 2013
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The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) announced today that more mosquito specimens have tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) in the Western part of the state. One positive mosquito specimen came from the City of Northampton and two from Town of Southampton.

Due to limited existing resources at the state level and diminished mosquito surveillance in the Western part of the state, Merridith A. O'Leary, Public Health Director for the City of Northampton has put together a program called the Pioneer Valley Arbovirus Project (PVAP) which will perform mosquito surveillance for the 2013 season in Southampton, Northampton and Amherst. O'Leary states that "mosquito surveillance is necessary to better understand the risk Arbovirus (mosquito borne disease such as West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis) poses to Hampshire County residents".

Partners for PVAP include; Julie Federmine, Amherst Public Health Director, Adam Kinney, Southampton Health Agent and Merridith O'Leary, Public Health Director for Northampton who is administering the project. In addition to doing surveillance in the three communities the project partners are also working on identifying areas of high risk for disease, looking at historical trends of Arbovirus in the area and producing community messaging material by creating educational brochures, signs and Public Service Announcements. O'Leary states that "historically incidences of these diseases have primarily been limited to Northeastern and Southeastern Massachusetts, however in recent years, prevalence of EEE and WNV has increased in the western portion of the state and monitoring, surveillance and public education for risk of disease in Western Mass has not followed suit".

In response to the positive specimens which have been collected by PVAP and tested by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), MDPH will perform supplemental surveillance in Western Mass regions with known risk of disease. O'Leary states that "MDPH has been instrumental in helping to get this project off the ground by assisting in training and technical support." For more information about Arbovirus disease, state surveillance, and reports of current and historical WNV and EEE virus activity in Massachusetts go to MDPH website at <http://www.mass.gov/dph/wnv> or (617) 983-6800. For local updates on surveillance efforts and mosquito born disease visit www.northampton.gov/health

A message that I would like to emphasize to all Hampshire County residents is that just because a positive EEE mosquito specimen has not been present in one of our 6 traps as of yet, please take the precautions to protect yourselves and family as it had. Avoid peak biting hours (dusk to dawn), remove standing water, wear an EPA approved insect repellent and long pants, sleeves and socks to help reduce the number of mosquito bites.