



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Department of Public Health

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Eastern Equine Encephalitis Confirmed in Cumberland Horse

FAYETTEVILLE – Although no cases of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in North Carolina have been reported in humans this year, the N.C. Department of Public Health has confirmed the death of a Cumberland County horse identified as having the disease. The case, which was reported to the state on July 7, indicates the disease is present in the county, and state and local public health officials are advising people to take precautions to protect themselves and their horses.

EEE is a rare disease. It is more common in the eastern part of North Carolina than in other areas of the state. The viral illness, transmitted by some species of mosquitoes, attacks the central nervous system by causing inflammation of the brain and can be fatal to animals and humans. Wild birds serve as reservoirs for the virus. Mosquitoes bite the birds and subsequently, can transmit the virus to humans and animals.

North Carolina averages about one human case of EEE and about 10 equine cases each year. About 50 percent of human EEE cases are fatal, with young children and the elderly most at risk.

Symptoms can develop from a few days to two weeks after being bitten by an infected mosquito and can resemble the flu with rapid onset of fever and headache. Survivors of EEE infections may suffer from long-term effects to the nervous system. Therapy is limited to treating the symptoms of the disease, but there is no specific cure. There is a vaccine for horses, but not for humans.

For people, the best defense against EEE infection is to avoid mosquito bites. Reduce time spent outdoors, particularly in early morning and early evening hours when mosquitoes are most active; wear light-colored long pants and long-sleeved shirts; and apply mosquito repellent to exposed skin areas. The best defense for horses is to vaccinate them against EEE. The American Academy of Equine Practitioners now recommends that EEE vaccine be administered to all horses as a component of a core vaccination program. See <http://www.aaep.org/info/guidelines> for additional details.

To reduce mosquito breeding areas around your home and farm:

- Remove any containers that can hold water.
- Keep gutters clean and in good repair.
- Repair leaky outdoor faucets and change the water in bird baths and pet bowls at least twice a week.
- Use screened windows and doors and make sure screens fit tightly and are not torn.
- Keep tight-fitting screens or lids on rain barrels.

For more information, visit <http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/diseases/arbo.html>.

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The Cumberland County Department of Public Health is giving away free mosquito insecticide to Cumberland County residents while supplies last. The Mosquito Dunks product is a biological pest control agent that kills mosquito larvae. It is non-toxic to fish, birds, wildlife and pets.

County residents can pick up a four-month supply of the insecticide at the Health Department, 1235 Ramsey St., Monday through Friday between 7:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. There are extended hours on Tuesdays from 5 to 7 p.m. Go to the Environmental Health section on the third floor.

If you would like more information about the Cumberland County Department of Public Health's programs and services, health-related data, or community resources, please call 910-433-3600 or visit with someone at the information desk, or visit our website at co.cumberland.nc.us/health.aspx#. Comments are welcome and can be submitted on our website at co.cumberland.nc.us/health/comment_form.aspx. The Health Department is located at 1235 Ramsey St. in Fayetteville.

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