PRESS RELEASE
August 26, 2008
For Immediate Release

West Nile Virus Confirmed in a Mosquito Sample from Canton

The Canton Board of Health has been notified by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) that the first West Nile Virus (WNV) positive mosquito sample of 2008 in Canton was identified on Tuesday, August 26, 2008.

Confirmatory laboratory tests were completed at the State Laboratory Institute on a pool of mosquitoes found in the eastern section of Canton. Despite cooler temperatures, mosquito activity continues throughout the late summer and early fall. This activity brings with it the risk for mosquito-borne diseases such as West Nile Virus. Since January 1, through August 26, 2008, there have been 60 mosquito pools as well as 40 birds that have tested positive for WNV

While WNV can infect people of all ages, however people over the age of 50 are at higher risk for severe infection. WNV is most commonly transmitted to humans by the bite of a human biting mosquito infected with the virus. The mosquito sample found to have tested positive for WNV in Canton consisted of the species Culex pipiens which is a non-human biting species. It does, however, indicate that the WNV is endemic in mosquito populations in Canton, which could potentially spread to human biting mosquitoes and, subsequently, to humans.

People infected with WNV may develop serious and sometimes life-altering or even life-threatening illnesses that require hospitalization, such as West Nile encephalitis and meningitis (conditions associated with inflammation of the brain or the area around the brain) or a polio-like paralysis. WNV illness occurs between three and fourteen days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Symptoms of severe WNV disease include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness, and paralysis. Symptoms can last several weeks, and neurological effects can be permanent

In the general population however, there are usually few, if any, symptoms associated with WNV. In most cases it may cause less severe flu-like symptoms with fever, headache, body aches, nausea, or vomiting. Sometimes this includes a skin rash on the chest, stomach, and back. These symptoms typically last a few days, but could last several weeks. There is no specific treatment for WNV disease.

The Canton Board of Health and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) recommend that the public take the following steps to avoid mosquito exposure and reduce mosquito populations around their homes and neighborhood.

- Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours - The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning. Otherwise, take extra care to use repellent and protective clothing wear a long-sleeved shirt and long pants.
- Use a mosquito repellent that contains DEET (the chemical N-N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) and follow the directions on the label. Never use DEET on infants. Avoid using repellents with DEET concentrations above 10-15% for children and with concentrations above 30-35% for adults.
- Take special care to cover up the arms and legs of children playing outdoors. If you choose to bring a baby outdoors, cover the baby's carriage or playpen with mosquito netting.
- Fix any holes in household screens and make sure they are tightly attached to all your doors and windows.

- Remove any standing water around the home to reduce habitats for mosquito breeding. Mosquitoes will begin to breed in any puddle or standing water that lasts for more than four days. Make sure water does not collect and stagnate in ceramic pots, trash cans, recycling containers, old tires, wading pools, bird baths, etc. Remove leaves and debris that may prevent drainage of roof gutters.

MDPH encourages all residents to continue to report dead birds, specifically crows and blue jays, through its public health information line at 1-866-MASS-WNV (1-866-627-7968).

Information about WNV and reports of WNV activity in Massachusetts during 2008 can be found on the MDPH website at www.state.ma.us/dph/wnv. The Canton Board of Health will continue to work closely with the MDPH and the Norfolk Mosquito Control Program to improve awareness of and decrease the risk from WNV.

Submitted,

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