

# BRADFORD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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## \*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\*

### PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES TO PREVENT MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESSES

With the notification from the Bradford Union Department of Health that a horse has tested positive and died from Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in Bradford County, Bradford County Emergency Management recommends the public be attentive in protecting themselves from exposure of mosquito bites which can cause the encephalitis disease. Horse owners are strongly encouraged to vaccinate their horses as well.

Symptoms develop four to 10 days after infection. In horses, they include unsteadiness, erratic behavior, and a marked loss of coordination. There is no effective treatment, and seizures resulting in death usually occur within 48 to 72 hours. Most people that are infected with the virus have no symptoms; others get only a mild flulike illness with fever, headache, and sore throat. When serious infection of the central nervous system occurs, a sudden fever and severe headache can be followed quickly by seizures and coma, which often result in death or permanent brain damage. A vaccine is available for horses, but not for humans.

The Bradford County Mosquito Control is actively spraying adult mosquito populations to protect the public from nuisance mosquitoes and mosquito borne diseases. The county is also checking with the Florida Division of Agriculture and the Federal Emergency Management to see if aerial spraying or other control measures are appropriate.

Additionally, we encourage everyone to take basic precautions to help limit exposure by following these recommendations:

#### **PRACTICE THE "5 D'S":**

- **DUSK** – Avoid outdoor activity when mosquitoes are most actively feeding and flying.
- **DAWN** – Avoid the outdoors during dawn when the presence of sunlight is weak.
- **DRESS** – Wear clothing that covers most of your skin when outdoors.
- **DEET** – Repellents containing Deet are highly recommended. Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus and IR3535 are other repellent options. Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before you apply a repellent. Some repellents are not suitable for children.
- **DRAINAGE** – check around your home to rid the areas of standing water, where mosquitoes lay eggs.

## **ELIMINATE MOSQUITO BREEDING SITES:**

- Clean out eaves, troughs and gutters
- Remove old tires or drill holes in those used in playgrounds to drain.
- Turn over or remove empty plastic pots.
- Pickup all beverage containers and cups
- Check traps on boats or other equipment that may collect water.
- Pump out bilges on boats.
- Replace water in birdbaths and pet dishes at least once a week.
- Change water in plant trays, including hanging plants, at least once a week.
- Remove vegetation or obstructions in drainage ditches that prevent the flow of water.

Interested in “Fighting the Bite”? Perhaps you should consider joining the Buzz Busters. Buzz Busters are volunteers who help the Bradford County Mosquito Control by monitoring mosquito populations in the county. The Buzz Busters use a pest control strategy called Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Using IPM means gathering information about a pest problem and using that information to select the best possible control strategy. The Buzz Busters are supported by many agencies, including the Bradford Board of County Commissioners, Bradford County Mosquito Control, Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District, University of Florida Integrated Pest Management, University of Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory and the Bradford County Extension Service. Call the University of Florida Bradford County Extension Service at 904-966-6299 if you are interested in becoming a Buzz Buster volunteer.

If you would like more information on EEE and its prevention, please contact Ed Rensberger at the Bradford and Union County Health Department at (904) 964-7732 ext. 1300.