



Charlie Crist
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.
State Surgeon General

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 17, 2009

Contact: Donna Harty
850-833-9245

**OKALOOSA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT URGES RESIDENTS TO
PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESS**

- Eastern Equine Encephalitis Reported in Okaloosa County

FORT WALTON BEACH -- The Okaloosa County Health Department (OCHD) has received notification that an Okaloosa County horse recently tested positive for Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), the most serious of the mosquito-borne diseases. It is now even more important for residents and tourists to protect themselves from mosquito-borne illness.

EEE is a mosquito-borne viral disease that can be deadly and may infect humans, horses, and some bird species. Because of the high mortality rate, EEE is regarded as one of the most serious mosquito-borne diseases in the United States. EEE virus occurs in the eastern half of the United States.

OCHD urges county residents and tourists to protect themselves from mosquito-borne illnesses using the 5 D's:

Dusk and Dawn

Avoid being outdoors during dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are seeking a blood meal.

Dress

Wear clothing that covers skin

DEET

Wear a mosquito repellent containing a 30% concentration of DEET if you are going to be exposed to mosquitoes. Most bottles or cans of repellent will list their concentrations of DEET, but you can double-check by looking for either "N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide" or "N, N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide" in the ingredients list.

Exception: It is not recommended to use DEET on children less than 2 months old. Infants should be kept indoors or mosquito netting used over carriers when mosquitoes are present.

Drainage

Check your home to rid it of standing water in which mosquitoes can lay their eggs (specific steps listed below).

Horse Owners

Horse owners should contact their veterinarian for information on vaccination of horses against mosquito borne diseases.

Tips on Eliminating 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.
- Pick up all beverage containers and cups.
- Check tarps on boats or other equipment that may collect water.
- Pump out bilges on boats.
- Replace water in birdbaths and pet or other animal feeding 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.

For more information on mosquito-borne diseases, please visit DOH's Environmental Health web site <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/arboviral/index.html> , the CDC web site www.cdc.gov, call the West Nile Virus Hotline at 1-888-880-5782, or contact your local county health department. Additionally, information on arboviruses can be found at the FDACS web site, <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/ai/>.

Residents of Florida are encouraged to report dead birds via the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)'s web site at <http://www.MyFWC.com/bird>, or call their county health department or local FWC office.

For additional information, please contact the Okaloosa County Health Department's Environmental Department at: 850-833-9247.

###