

Preventing Mosquito-Borne Illness

The recent isolation of mosquitoes carrying the EEE virus in southeastern Massachusetts reminds us of the need to protect ourselves for mosquito-borne illness. Although surveillance has not identified EEE or West Nile Virus in mosquitoes collected in Peabody, the WNV virus has been identified in birds in Peabody in prior years. The Peabody Health Department recommends that people take a few common-sense precautions to protect themselves and their loved ones from mosquito-borne illnesses:

- Limit your time outdoors during peak periods of mosquito activity (dusk and dawn) or, if you must remain outdoors, wear a long-sleeved shirt and long pants.
- Use a mosquito repellent that contains DEET or Picaridin. Oil of lemon eucalyptus may also be considered. Products with permethrin should only be used on clothing. Always follow the directions on the label. Repellents should not be used on children younger than two months of age. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age.
- Cover up the arms and legs of children playing outdoors. When you bring a baby outdoors, cover the baby's carriage or playpen with mosquito netting.
- Fix any holes in screens and make sure they are tightly attached to all doors and windows.
- Remove any standing water from backyards so mosquitoes can't breed. 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, birds baths, etc. Remove leaves and debris that may prevent drainage of roof gutters.

Because it is already known that West Nile Virus has been present in our local bird population, the Peabody Health Department will not be testing birds on a routine basis. Residents who find dead birds on their property should dispose of the bird following the following procedure:

- Do not touch a bird with bare hands. Use a shovel or other tool and wear gloves.
- Use double plastic bags to seal up the bird.
- Place double-bagged bird in the trash for disposal.
- Wash hands with soap and water, and clean and disinfect any tools used.

In addition to disposing of the bird, we request that you contact the Peabody Health Department at 978-538-5926 to report the location where the bird was found.