

**Media partners: please note this is joint release from the Collier County Health Department and the Collier Mosquito Control District. Dr. Joan Colfer and Dr. Frank Van Essen will be available for comment this afternoon. If you are interested in an interview, please contact me or Adrian. Thank you.**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Third Horse Death - Related to Mosquito Illness**

**Collier:** A third horse, in less than a month, has died after contracting a mosquito-borne illness, Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus (EEE). "We are concerned about the presence of this virus in our community. It has had a tragic outcome for the owners of these horses and we sympathize with their loss. Of further concern is these deaths alert us to the fact that our residents are also at risk of acquiring EEE" informs Collier County Health Department Director, Joan Colfer, M.D., M.P.H.. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention reports all residents of and visitors to areas where EEE activity has been identified are at risk of infection.

Health officials are worried because there has not been a horse or human case of EEE in Collier County for at least 24 years, according to Dr. Frank Van Essen, Executive Director, Collier Mosquito Control District. With three horse deaths so early in our mosquito season, it is imperative horse owners vaccinate their horses against EEE and because there is no vaccine for humans, individuals need to be vigilant about protecting themselves from being bitten by a mosquito.

EEE causes severe illness in humans and horses. Symptoms in humans develop 3-10 days after the bite of an infected mosquito and begin with a sudden onset of fever, general muscle pains, and a headache of increasing severity. Symptoms can become more severe over 1-2 weeks and infected individuals will either recover or show onset of inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) with seizures and vomiting.

Human cases are usually preceded by those in horses. Disease transmission does not occur directly from person to person. Those at highest risk are people who live in or visit woodland areas, people who work or participate in outdoor work or recreational activities where there is greater exposure to potentially infected mosquitoes.

The Health Department and the Collier Mosquito Control District reminds residents and visitors to take precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Everyone is encouraged to take the basic steps to limit exposure by following these recommendations:

To protect yourself from mosquitoes, you should remember the “**5Ds**”:

- **Dusk and Dawn** -- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are seeking blood. For many species, this is during the dusk and dawn hours.
- **Dress** -- Wear clothing that covers most of your skin.
- **DEET** -- When the potential exists for exposure to mosquitoes, repellents containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide, or N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide) are 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 area of standing water, which is where mosquitoes can lay their eggs.

### **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.

There are vaccines available for use in horses in protecting them against EEE, WEE, and WNV. Horse owners should contact their veterinarian about the appropriate use of these vaccines.

For more information on mosquito-borne illnesses, and mosquito control treatment schedules visit:

The Collier Mosquito Control District website at: [www.CMCD.org](http://www.CMCD.org)

DOH's Environmental Health web site at

<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/medicine/arboviral/index.html>

or call the Collier County Health Department at 239-252-8226. For a two-page Mosquito-borne Disease in Florida Fact sheet describing the transmission cycle, symptoms of illness and mosquito-borne disease prevention go to

<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/medicine/arboviral/pdfs/EducationalMaterials/Arbo factsheet Color Eng.pdf>