

June 20, 2019

NASSAU COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT REMINDS THE PUBLIC OF PRECAUTIONS TO HELP PREVENT VECTOR-BORNE DISEASE



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Fernandina Beach, Fla.—The Nassau County Health Department (Nassau CHD) is reminding the public of the importance of preventing vector-borne diseases, which are spread through bites from mosquitoes and ticks. As summer approaches and Florida residents and visitors spend more time outdoors, the likelihood of people and animals becoming infected with vector-borne diseases increases. Campers, hunters, and others who spend time outside should take steps to protect themselves, and animal owners should take steps to protect their animals.

Mosquito-borne Disease

Beginning in May, Nassau CHD conducts county-wide surveillance in coordination with the arbovirus sentinel chicken flock program for mosquito-borne illnesses, including West Nile virus (WNV), Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus (EEEV), and St. Louis encephalitis virus (SLEV), Highlands J virus (HJV) at six locations sites across Nassau County. Nassau CHD also monitors reports of veterinary cases of mosquito-borne illness. So far in 2019, no human or veterinary cases of mosquito-borne illnesses have been reported and no sentinel chickens have tested positive in Nassau County.

Nassau County residents and visitors should remain diligent in protecting themselves from mosquito bites by following these recommendations:

- Drain standing water once or twice a week from flower pots, pool covers, pet water bowls, toys, or any other containers where sprinkler or rain water has collected to stop mosquitoes from multiplying. Discard old tires, drums, broken appliances, and other items that aren't being used.
- Cover your skin with clothing and use mosquito repellent. Wear shoes, socks, and long pants and long sleeves to cover your skin. Always use repellents according to the label. Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than two months old. Permethrin can be applied to clothing and gear, but not skin.
- Cover doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out. Repair broken screens on windows, doors, porches and patios.

For more information about mosquito-borne diseases, visit

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/index.html>.

Tick-borne Disease

Tick-borne diseases are present throughout the year in Florida, but occur more frequently in the spring and summer. The most common diseases that come from ticks in Florida are ehrlichiosis, anaplasmosis, Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever and other spotted fever illnesses. Symptoms of tick-borne diseases usually start within two weeks of being bitten. Although there are disease-specific symptoms such as the bull's eye rash that can be seen in some cases of Lyme disease, the most common symptoms for tick-borne disease are fever, headache, and muscle pain. These symptoms may also be seen with many other types of illnesses. Therefore, if you become ill after recently being in an area that is wooded or has long grass, it is always important to tell your health care provider that you were in a tick habitat so that tick-borne diseases are considered. These diseases can be treated with appropriate antibiotics.

Avoiding tick bites is the best way to prevent tick-borne disease. The public is reminded to take the following precautions to help prevent tick bites:

- Apply repellent to help prevent ticks from biting. Read label directions carefully when applying repellent. Apply permethrin to clothing and gear.
- Dress so your skin is covered in white or light-colored clothing when ticks might be present so you can see if any ticks are crawling on your clothes. Tuck your pant legs into your socks so that ticks cannot crawl up the inside of your pants.
- Walk in the center of the trail or path to avoid touching tall grasses and other plants in tick-infested areas.
- Perform regular tick checks on yourself, your family, and your pets.
- Shower soon after being in a tick habitat.
- Use veterinarian recommended products to keep ticks off your pets.
- Keep grass, shrubs, and trees close to your residence trimmed to control ticks around the home.

For more information about tick-borne diseases, visit <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/tick-and-insect-borne-diseases/index.html>.

About the Florida Department of Health

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