



TOWN OF PLYMOUTH

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PLYMOUTH TO CLOSE ALL PUBLIC PARKS AND FIELDS FROM DUSK TO DAWN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 8/23/2024

PLYMOUTH, MA – The Town of Plymouth's public parks and fields will close daily from dusk until dawn beginning today, Friday, August 23rd in response to Plymouth's HIGH risk status of Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE). Athletic leagues and other organizations utilizing public parks and fields will be prohibited from continuing outdoor activities beyond dusk. Signs will be placed at all public parks and fields enforcing this message.

The recent EEE infection diagnosed in a horse exposed in Plymouth initially raised the Town's EEE risk level to high. There have also been EEE-infected mosquitoes previously identified in Plymouth County (Halifax and Kingston), Barnstable County (Barnstable), and in Essex County (Amesbury and Haverhill).

Per the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), EEE is a rare but serious and potentially fatal disease that can affect people of all ages and is generally spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. The EEE fatality rate in humans varies from 33% to 70%, with most deaths occurring 2–10 days after the onset of symptoms. Long-term physical and mental complications, including permanent neurological deficits have been identified in many people who survive EEE.

“As Mass DPH has now elevated Plymouth’s EEE risk status to high, it is important to take extra precautions when outdoors and follow state and local health guidelines to avoid unnecessary risk to exposure to EEE. The health and safety of our community, residents, and visitors remain our priority,” **said Plymouth’s Commissioner of Health and Human Services, Michelle Bratti.**

The Plymouth County Mosquito Control Project has continuously been spraying requested neighborhoods (weather permitting) and will conduct ground spraying for all public parks and fields early next week with spraying for all schools occurring by mid-week (spraying takes place between 2 a.m. and sunrise).

Although spraying will be done at all schools, public parks, and fields, it is recommended that Plymouth property owners follow the same protocols to optimize public safety. For more information on upcoming neighborhood spray routes, to request additional spraying, or to opt out of having your home sprayed, please visit: <https://www.plymouthmosquito.org/home.html>.

To protect yourself and loved ones from mosquito bites and the diseases that can be transmitted, it is important to follow tips found on the Massachusetts Department of Health's website listed below:

Avoid Mosquito Bites

- Apply Insect Repellent when Outdoors. Use a repellent with an EPA-registered ingredient, such as DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), or oil of lemon eucalyptus (p-menthane-3,8-diol (PMD) or IR3535) according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30 percent or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age.
- Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours. The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning in areas of high risk. Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites. Wearing long sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.

Mosquito-Proof Your Home

- Drain Standing Water. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by draining or discarding items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty unused flowerpots and wading pools and change the water in birdbaths frequently.
- Install or Repair Screens. Keep mosquitoes outside by having tightly fitting screens on all windows and doors.

Protect Your Animals

- Animal owners should reduce potential mosquito breeding sites on their property by eliminating standing water from containers such as buckets, tires, and wading pools – especially after heavy rains. Water troughs provide excellent mosquito breeding habitats and should be flushed out at least once a week during the summer months to reduce mosquitoes near paddock areas. Horse owners should keep horses in indoor stalls at night to reduce their risk of exposure to mosquitoes. Owners should also speak with their veterinarian about mosquito repellents approved for use in animals and vaccinations to prevent WNV and EEE.

If an animal is suspected of having WNV or EEE, owners are required to report to the Department of Agricultural Resources, Division of Animal Health by calling 617-626-1795, and to the Department of Public Health by calling 617- 983-6800.

More information, including all WNV- and EEE-positive results can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mosquito-borne-disease-prevention> or by calling the DPH Division of Epidemiology at 617-983-6800.

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