



MEDIA RELEASE

Contact: Angela Lee, Health Director
(910) 989-3983
Angela_Lee@onslowcountync.gov

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Eastern Equine Encephalitis Found in Onslow County Horse

(Onslow County) – A horse in Onslow County has been diagnosed with Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) according to North Carolina Public Health and Department of Agriculture officials. This is in addition to five other horses and one human case identified in the state recently by officials. There are no human cases of EEE in Onslow County.

Both horses and humans get EEE through the bite of an infected mosquito. “Although it is a rare disease, the fact that a horse in Onslow County has been infected means that the disease is present in some local mosquitos,” explained Pamela Brown, Onslow County Health Department Public Information Officer.

Some people infected with EEE have no symptoms. However, those who do develop symptoms may have fever and joint or muscle pain. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, those with a severe form of the disease will have “sudden onset of headache, high fever, chills, and vomiting. The illness may then progress into disorientation, seizures, and coma.”

“EEE can be a dangerous disease, so we urge anyone who has these symptoms to contact their medical provider quickly,” added Brown. There is no vaccine for humans and the only treatments available are for symptoms, not for the disease itself.

According to Angela Lee, Health Director for the Onslow County Health Department, “The message we want Onslow County residents to understand is that although it is very rare to be infected by Eastern Equine Encephalitis, it is in some mosquitos in our area. Therefore, the best way to prevent an EEE infection is not to be bitten by a mosquito.”

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The following suggestions can help prevent mosquito bites:

- Use insect repellent, especially one with “DEET, picaridin, IR3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus,” (CDC.gov).
- Wear long sleeved shirts and pants when possible.
- Ensure screens on windows and doors have no holes.
- Empty anything around your home, or in your home, that has water in it; change the water in pet drinking bowls or bird baths every few days; and cover or drain child swimming pools when not in use.

Although there is no vaccine for humans, there is one for horses, so owners should have their animals immunized. Owners should check with their veterinarian to determine the best vaccination schedule for their horses.

For additional information, please contact the Onslow County Health Department at 910-347-2154 or visit onslowcountync.gov/health or cdc.gov.

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