



The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **State Mosquito Monitoring Program Begins Testing for Mosquito-Borne Viral Diseases**

**New Haven, CT** - The State of Connecticut Mosquito Management Program today announced it is monitoring mosquitoes for the presence of viruses that can cause illness in people including West Nile virus (WNV) and eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus. The mosquito trapping and testing program, coordinated by The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), begins June 3 and lasts until the end of October.

Last year, WNV was detected in 188 mosquito pools from 44 towns in seven counties in Connecticut. The majority of WNV activity was detected in densely populated urban and suburban regions in Fairfield, Hartford, and New Haven counties. Five human cases of WNV-associated illness were reported with dates of onset from July 22 to September 30. WNV occurs every summer in the Northeast and has become the main cause of mosquito-borne illness in this region since it was first introduced into the New York City area in 1999.

EEE virus was detected from 107 mosquito pools in the state during 2023. Virus positive mosquitoes were found throughout eastern CT in 18 towns in New London, Tolland and Windham counties. Veterinary cases of EEE were also reported from 3 horses and an emu in the same region. There were no human cases reported in the state. EEE is a rare but serious illness in humans with 4-8 cases reported in a typical year in the U.S. The last major outbreak in the U.S. occurred in 2019 when the number of confirmed human cases rose to 38 with 4 cases (3 fatalities) occurring in Connecticut.

"The mosquito season has begun." said Dr. Philip Armstrong, Chief Scientist at CAES. "We anticipate higher numbers of mosquitoes this season given the abundant rainfall this year. Mosquitoes are not only annoying pests

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but can transmit West Nile virus and other serious mosquito-borne illnesses. We encourage everyone to take precautionary measures against mosquito bites such as covering bare skin and wearing mosquito repellent especially during dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active."

To reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes, residents should:

- Minimize time spent outdoors between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Be sure door and window screens are tight-fitting and in good repair.
- Wear shoes, socks, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors for long periods of time, or when mosquitoes are more active. Clothing should be light colored and made of tightly woven materials that keep mosquitoes away from the skin.
- Use mosquito netting when sleeping outdoors or in an unscreened structure and to protect small babies when outdoors.
- Consider the use of an EPA-registered mosquito repellent, according to directions, when it is necessary to be outdoors.

The response to mosquito transmitted diseases in Connecticut is a collaborative inter-agency effort involving the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Pathobiology at the University of Connecticut (UCONN). These agencies are responsible for monitoring mosquito populations and the potential public health threat of mosquito-borne diseases.

The CAES maintains a network of 108 mosquito-trapping stations in 88 municipalities throughout the state. Mosquito traps are set Monday – Thursday nights at each site every ten days on a rotating basis and then at least once a week after detection of virus. Mosquitoes are grouped (pooled) for testing according to species, collection site, and date. Positive findings are reported to local health departments and on the CAES website at <https://portal.ct.gov/CAES/Mosquito-Testing/Introductory/State-of-Connecticut-Mosquito-Trapping-and-Arbovirus-Testing-Program>.

For information on WNV and EEE, what can be done to prevent getting bitten by mosquitoes, the latest mosquito test results and human infections, visit the Connecticut Mosquito Management Program web site at <https://portal.ct.gov/mosquito>.

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