

Date: Sept. 7, 2018

Subject: Mosquitoes test positive for West Nile Virus – targeted spraying for Sept. 11

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Mosquitoes test positive for West Nile Virus – targeted spraying set for Sept. 11

PITTSFIELD, Mass. – On Thursday, Sept. 6, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health confirmed the presence of West Nile Virus in samples of mosquitoes collected by the Berkshire County Mosquito Control Project in the City of Pittsfield. There have been 20 positive samples in the city in recent weeks and the risk of West Nile virus disease from the bite of an infected mosquito is elevated across the Commonwealth.

The state's health department also reported nine human and two animal cases of West Nile virus this season, all outside of Berkshire County. Most human cases of West Nile Virus occur in August and September. The majority of people who are infected will not have symptoms. About 20 percent of infected people will have symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, skin rash on chest, stomach and back. One percent of infected people will develop severe illness.

To reduce the mosquito population and potential for infection, truck-mounted mosquito spray application is scheduled for 10 p.m.-2 a.m. Tuesday Sept. 11, on roads within a one-mile radius from intersection of Pecks Road and Wahconah Street; Garland Avenue and North Street; Warwick Street and Pomeroy Avenue. The rain date will be Wednesday, Sept 12.

A map of scheduled spray area can be accessed through the Health Department page on the city's website: http://www.cityofpittsfield.org/city_hall/health_and_inspections/index.php. Click on "2018 Mosquito Control Update" to view the map.

Scheduled spraying is done after dusk when mosquitoes are most active, people are inside and bees are dormant. According to a Mass DPH fact sheet about ground spraying of mosquitoes (available here: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/mosquito-control-and-spraying>), "exposure to the insecticide can be reduced by staying indoors during spraying. There are otherwise no special precautions that should be taken. The product used in the truck-mounted spray application breaks down quickly and does not leave a toxic residue."

It is very important to take personal protective measures to avoid bites:

- When outdoors, wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt and socks.
- Use a repellent with DEET according to the instructions on the product label.
- Keep mosquitoes out of your house by repairing holes in screens and making sure screens fit tightly to doors and windows.
- Schedule outdoor events to avoid the hours between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Remove areas of standing water around your home twice a week to eliminate sources of mosquito breeding.

Residents may request to be excluded from pesticide application by submitting an Exclusion Request Form which can be obtained at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/pesticides/mosquito/pesticide-application-exclusions.html>. The form is also available by contacting the Berkshire County Mosquito Control Project at 413-447-9808 or berkmc@bcn.net.

For more information about mosquito borne viruses call the Pittsfield Health Department at 499-9411 or visit the city's Health Department page at http://www.cityofpittsfield.org/city_hall/health_and_inspections/index.php or the Massachusetts Department of Public Health website at <https://www.mass.gov/mosquito-borne-diseases>