



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Kent County deer tests positive for Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE)  
Health Department Urges Caution to Avoid Infection**

**GRAND RAPIDS** – The Michigan Department Health and Human Services (MDHHS) notified the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) this morning a deer in Kent County was found to have Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) during a necropsy (autopsy). The KCHD is urging residents to take steps to protect themselves from EEE and West Nile Virus (WNV).

The MDHHS is encouraging local officials in Kent County to consider postponing, rescheduling or cancelling outdoor activities occurring at or after dusk, particularly activities that involve children. This would include events such as late evening outdoor sports practices, games or music practices. The MDHHS recommendation is being made out of an abundance of caution to protect the public health and applies until the first hard frost of the year.

**To date, there have been no human cases of EEE or WNV reported in Kent County.** In Michigan, the MDHHS has confirmed EEE in eight human cases, including three that were fatal. Four Michigan residents have been sickened by WNV so far this year. WNV infected mosquitoes have been detected in Kent County.

“EEE is an exceedingly rare but dangerous disease,” says Dr. Nirali Bora, KCHD Medical Director. “Only about 4 to 5 percent of human EEE infections result in illness and most people who are infected will never show symptoms. Those who do become infected may develop fever, chills, body and joint aches.”

Less than 1 percent of people infected can develop a serious neurological issue which can progress to encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Approximately 30 percent of the people whose illness progresses to this point will die and many survivors have ongoing neurologic issue.

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 265 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit [www.accesskent.com/health](http://www.accesskent.com/health).

Since there is no human vaccine against either disease, people are urged to protect themselves against mosquito bites through the following steps:

- Limit time spent outdoors during dusk.
- Apply insect repellents that contain the active ingredient DEET. Follow all label directions. To find out more about repellants go to <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents>.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. Apply DEET insect repellent to clothing to help prevent bites.
- Maintain window and door screening to help keep mosquitoes outside.
- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires or similar sites where mosquitoes may lay eggs.

As part of its response to the EEE outbreak, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has posted a list of pesticide applicator businesses that are licensed to spray for mosquitoes in Michigan at <https://www.michigan.gov/mosquitocontrolbusiness>.

With warm weather in the forecast, mosquitoes will continue to be active for the foreseeable future in West Michigan. KCHD is asking people to be aware of these mosquito borne illnesses and act accordingly.

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