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HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
NEWS RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**State of Michigan To Conduct Aerial Spraying to Combat Eastern Equine Encephalitis**

*Health Department Urges Caution to Avoid Infection*

**(Grand Rapids, Mich. – September 14, 2020)** – The Michigan Department Health and Human Services (MDHHS) notified the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) today it will conduct aerial spraying in high risk areas in ten counties throughout the State in order to combat further spread of the deadly disease Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). Northern Kent County and the Sand Lake area are included in this treatment area.

Aerial spraying is conducted by low-flying aircraft and scheduled to take place starting the evening of Wednesday, Sept. 16. However, the ability to spray is weather dependent and the schedule may change.

The Michigan Department of Agricultural and Rural Development (MDARD) also issued an [emergency rule](#) temporarily amending the rule on notification and participation for community pesticide applications for aerial spraying treatment across affected counties. Meaning, mosquito control treatment is required for all properties in the identified areas and property owners *cannot* opt out of the treatment.

**To date, no human cases of EEE have been reported in Michigan or Kent County and EEE has been identified in one animal in Kent County.**

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 from an abundance of caution to protect the public health and applies until the first hard frost of the year.

Since there is no human vaccine for EEE, residents are urged to protect themselves against mosquito bites through the following steps:

- Avoid being outside during dusk.

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).

- Apply insect repellents that contain the active ingredient DEET. Follow all label directions.
- 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.
- Avoid boggy or marshy areas.

Symptoms of EEE include fever, chills, body, and joint ache which can progress to encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Anyone experiencing these symptoms should contact their medial provider.

Since mosquitoes will continue to be active for the foreseeable future in West Michigan, the health department is asking residents to be aware of this mosquito borne illnesses and act accordingly.

Residents are encouraged to visit [Michigan.gov/EEE](https://Michigan.gov/EEE) for up-to-date information and all media inquiries on aerial spraying should be directed to [wheatonb@michigan.gov](mailto:wheatonb@michigan.gov).

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