

EMU IN MARION COUNTY TESTS POSITIVE FOR EASTERN EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS

OCALA, Fla.—The Florida Department of Health in Marion County wants Marion County residents, visitors, and horse and emu owners to be aware that an emu in Marion County has tested positive for eastern equine encephalitis, or EEE. The emu was unvaccinated.

This marks three total animal cases of eastern equine encephalitis in Marion County this year. The first two cases involved horses. Eastern equine encephalitis is a mosquito-borne virus first recognized in humans in 1938. It cycles between mosquitoes and birds in freshwater swampy areas and is capable of infecting mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles. The disease is 80 to 90 percent fatal in horses and emus and 30 to 45 percent fatal in humans. Symptoms develop three to 10 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. The state averages more than 60 reported cases of equine EEE and one to two human cases annually.

People who board animals or reside in Marion County should maintain a heightened awareness about the threat of EEE. Residents and visitors are encouraged to get their horses vaccinated for EEE if they are not currently vaccinated. Individuals in Marion County should take basic precautions to help limit exposure to the virus by remembering to drain and cover.

DRAIN standing water to stop mosquitoes from multiplying.

- Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flower pots or any other containers where sprinkler or rain water has collected.
- Discard old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances and other items that aren't being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pets' water bowls at least once or twice a week
- Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that don't accumulate water.
- Maintain swimming pools in good condition and appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.

COVER skin with clothing or repellent.

- Clothing - Wear shoes, socks, and long pants and long-sleeves. This type of protection may be necessary for people who must work in areas where mosquitoes are present.
- Repellent - Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing. Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, and IR3535 are effective. Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months old.

Tips on Repellent Use

- Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before you apply a repellent. Some repellents are not suitable for children.
- Products with concentrations of up to 30 percent DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) are generally recommended. Other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved repellents contain picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or IR3535. These products are generally available at local pharmacies. Look for active ingredients to be listed on the product label.

- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin, or onto clothing, but not under clothing.
- In protecting children, read label instructions to be sure the repellent is age-appropriate. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), mosquito repellents containing oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under the age of three years. DEET is not recommended on children younger than two months old.
- Avoid applying repellents to the hands of children. Adults should apply repellent first to their own hands and then transfer it to the child's skin and clothing.
- If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to your clothing. Again, always follow the manufacturer's directions.

COVER doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out of your house.

- Repair broken screening on windows, doors, porches, and patios.

The department continues to conduct statewide surveillance for mosquito-borne illnesses, including West Nile virus infections, eastern equine encephalitis, St. Louis encephalitis, malaria, chikungunya, and dengue. For more information, visit www.floridahealth.gov/%5C/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases. For more information on eastern equine encephalitis, go to www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/eastern-equine-encephalitis.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.