



Nashoba Associated Boards of Health

Serving the towns of Ashburnham, Ashby, Ayer, Berlin, Bolton, Boxborough, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Pepperell, Shirley, Stow, Townsend, and the community of Devens, in partnership with your local Board of Health.

State Health Officials Announce First Animal Case of WNV in Massachusetts This Season, Prompting Local Arbovirus Risk Level Changes

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The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced the first confirmed case of West Nile virus in an animal this year. A goat was exposed to WNV in Lunenburg in Worcester County. The towns of Lunenburg, Leominster, Shirley, and Fitchburg are being raised from low to moderate risk.

WNV is usually transmitted to susceptible animals and humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. The first evidence of WNV in mosquitoes in 2025 was announced on June 17, and 10 positive mosquito samples identified so far this year. There have been no human cases of WNV detected. There were nineteen human cases of WNV in 2024 and no animal cases. No evidence of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) has been found so far this season. There were four human cases of EEE and three animal cases – all in horses – in 2024.

While WNV can infect people of all ages, people over the age of 50 are at higher risk for severe disease. [Most people infected with WNV will have no symptoms.](#) When present, WNV symptoms tend to include fever and flu-like illness. In rare cases, more severe illness can occur.

“Animals that live outdoors are at somewhat higher risk from arboviruses than humans who spend more time indoors,” said **State Epidemiologist Dr. Catherine M. Brown**. “But the weather this summer is creating the opportunity for it to be a busy WNV season and it is important to take steps to prevent mosquito bites.”

By taking a few common sense precautions, people can help to protect themselves and their loved ones:

Avoid Mosquito Bites

- **Apply Insect Repellent** when you go outdoors. Use a repellent with **DEET** (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), **permethrin**, **picaridin** (KBR 3023), **IR3535** or **oil of lemon eucalyptus** [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age. Permethrin products are intended for use on items such as clothing, shoes, bed nets and camping gear and should not be applied to skin.



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- **Clothing Can Help** reduce mosquito bites. Although it may be difficult to do when it's hot, wearing long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.
- **Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours** - The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. When risk is increased, consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning. If you are outdoors at any time and notice mosquitoes around you, take steps to avoid being bitten by moving indoors, covering up and/or wearing repellent.

Mosquito-Proof Your Home

- **Drain Standing Water** – Many mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by either draining or getting rid of items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools and change water in birdbaths frequently.
- **Install or Repair Screens** - Some mosquitoes like to come indoors. Keep them outside by having tightly-fitting screens on all your windows and doors.

While Nashoba Associated Boards of Health (NABH) continues to work closely with the MDPH and other agencies, locally we provide educational materials at health fairs and targeted education programs as well as distributing fact sheets on reducing exposure to mosquitoes and risk of bites. Fact sheets and additional information can be found on the NABH Resources Page (www.nashoba.org/resources) under Environmental Resources in the *Mosquitoes, Ticks, & Outdoor Safety* section.

Information about EEE and WNV, as well as reports of current and historical EEE and WNV activity in Massachusetts, can be found on the MDPH website at www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito and www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-arbovirus-update.