

HardisonInk.com

Florida Department of Health warns that Gilchrist County joins Levy County in Encephalitis detection

By Jeff M. Hardison © May 26, 2018 at 9:38 a.m.

TRI-COUNTY AREA -- The Florida Department of Health warns all residents and visitors to be aware and to protect themselves from mosquito-borne illnesses at all times.

With summer just around the corner, and with a horse being identified in Gilchrist County now as showing positive results for Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), Gilchrist County joins Levy County in areas where even more caution is recommended in regard to being bitten by mosquitoes.

Levy County is currently under a mosquito-borne illness alert.

Wesley Asbell, the Florida Department of Health's Environmental Division Specialist for Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties noted that due to the identification of an EEE-positive horse in Gilchrist County, Florida Department of Health (DOH) officials emphasize the importance of residents and visitors protecting themselves against mosquito-borne diseases. The public should remain diligent in preventative measures like "Drain and Cover," Asbell said.

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 pet's 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, 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, 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.

HardisonInk.com

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

To determine which repellent is right for you, consider using the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's search tool for skin-repellent products:

<http://cfpub.epa.gov/oppref/insect/#searchform>.

DOH continues to conduct statewide surveillance for mosquito-borne illnesses, including West Nile Virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis, St. Louis Encephalitis, Malaria and Dengue. For more information on mosquito-borne illnesses, visit DOH's Web site by clicking [HERE](#) or call your local county health department.

Residents and visitors of Florida are encouraged to report dead birds via the website for Surveillance of Wild-bird Die-offs located at <http://legacy.myfwc.com/bird/default.asp>.