

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

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County's First Case of EEE Claims Horse in Westmoreland *"Positive Mosquito Pool Found in Western Oneida County"*

The first case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in Oneida County this year has been confirmed, Oneida County Health Department officials said today.

A horse in Westmoreland, which was suffering from neurological symptoms associated with EEE, was euthanized last week and subsequent testing confirmed the virus. Meanwhile, the Oneida County Health Department reported that its first positive mosquito pool was discovered in the western part of the county bordering Oswego County. This is the same area that produced a number of positive EEE samples in August of last year resulting in aerial spraying to suppress the adult mosquito population.

"The Health Department has been routinely testing mosquito pools in the area where the horse contracted the virus but had seen no positive specimens to date," Dr. Gayle Jones, Director of Health said. She added, *"Our first positive results comes from a mosquito pool collected miles from the site of the sickened horse and involve a species of mosquito 'Culisetta Melanura' that rarely bites humans, and feeds almost exclusively on birds."*

Eastern Equine Encephalitis is considered among the most serious mosquito-borne viruses. Horses are susceptible to the illness which almost always proves fatal to the animal. If contracted by humans, EEE can produce symptoms ranging from mild flu-like illness to inflammation of the brain, coma and death in about a third of those affected.

Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente, Jr. has directed the Health Department to continue to closely monitor the situation throughout the county.

"We will, as always, be diligent in view of these developments and will take whatever measures are prudent to insure the public's health and safety," Picente said.

According to the health department, positive EEE mosquito pools had previously been reported this year in neighboring Oswego County.

For more information on Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) or other mosquito-borne illnesses call the Oneida County Health Department at 798-5064 or visit our website at www.ocgov.net.

