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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Human Services
Department of Public Health

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PRESS CONFERENCE
FRIDAY, JULY 27, 1990
1:30 P.M.
PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL ROOM
150 TREMONT STREET
Boston, MA 02111

July 27, 1990

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Eastern Encephalitis Alert

DPH RECOMMENDS INTENSIFIED SPRAYING DUE TO
EASTERN ENCEPHALITIS RISK FROM MOSQUITOES

Due to the increased risk of Eastern Encephalitis (EE), the Department of Public Health has recommended intensified spraying to reduce adult mosquito populations in eastern Massachusetts.

Ralph Timperi, Assistant Commissioner of Public Health said, "EE virus has been found this year in the mosquitoes trapped in southeastern Massachusetts earlier than in any previous year. Mosquitoes caught in Lakeville and Halifax have been found to carry EE virus. An additional risk factor is that Coquilletidia perturbans mosquitoes, which are known to bite humans, have been found to be carrying EE virus. More recently HJ virus, a virus that does not cause human illness but often precedes the appearance of EE virus, has been isolated from mosquitoes outside the usual area of virus activity. HJ virus has been found in mosquitoes caught in the southeastern Massachusetts towns of Halifax, Easton, Raynham, Carver, Rehoboth and in the northeastern Massachusetts town of Reading. Other criteria that support aggressive control are recent heavy rains on a background of total precipitation that is above average this year, mosquito populations above the long-term median level and a high rate of EE virus infection in mosquitoes."

Based on criteria used to assess the risk of EE transmission to humans, DPH has recommended aggressive mosquito control activities to reduce the chance of transmission of EE virus to humans. DPH met with representatives of the Department of Food and Agriculture (DFA), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and

(see over)

Mosquito Control District Superintendents to review laboratory data from the EE Surveillance Program. (DFA, DEP and DEM each appoint a representative to the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board which oversees the operation of mosquito control activities.)

DPH recommends the following actions at this time to reduce human exposure to EE virus:

- 1) Intensify spraying of adult mosquitoes in high risk areas, especially near places of high public use such as ballparks and playgrounds. This area is defined by the towns of Plymouth County with emphasis on Lakeville and Halifax, Bristol County with emphasis on Easton, and possibly Middlesex County with emphasis on Reading and Wakefield. (The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will set limits for spraying to ensure protection of surface water supplies. DPH certifies that additional pesticide spraying is necessary for public health purposes. Implementation of intensified spray activities will be authorized by the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board after consultation with DPH and local officials in affected towns.)
- 2) Require overnight camp grounds in high risk areas to post notice of the DPH EE alert and provide advice on personal protection at the time of registration.
- 3) Establish an emergency fund for the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board for regional mosquito control activities.
- 4) Develop contingency plans for spraying wider areas to kill adult mosquitoes and larvae, if needed.
- 5) Provide an education forum for persons in the high risk areas.
- 6) Prepare wider area warnings to the general population regarding prevention of EE.

Arlene O'Donnell, Assistant Commissioner for the Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Resource Protection stated, "The DEP is in agreement with DPH's Health Advisory and will carefully review the mosquito control plans to ensure that the spraying activities have minimal effects on water resources. This situation emphasizes the need to adopt comprehensive regulations for mosquito control activities."

The chemicals recommended for control of adult mosquitoes are malathion and resmethrin. As with all chemicals, exposure should be kept to a minimum. The intensified spraying activities would be directed at the human biting mosquito, Coquilletidia perturbans, that is prevalent at this time. Intensified spraying activities would be limited to areas of EE and/or HJ virus activity.

DPH will continue its surveillance program to monitor EE virus activity and issue additional advisories as needed.