



For Immediate Release

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Vector Borne Surveillance and Prevention in Van Buren and Cass County Protect against ticks and mosquitoes

Lawrence, MI - Van Buren/Cass District Health Department (VBCDHD) will continue participating in a Vector-Borne Disease Surveillance and Prevention Program in partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

VBCDHD will be providing mosquito and tick monitoring data to MDHHS as part of a statewide system that helps communities track and prepare for emerging vector-borne diseases. Environmental Health professionals perform and support human and ecologic surveillance for mosquito-borne diseases to inform the public, healthcare providers, and stakeholder agencies about preventive measures and control options.

Mosquito-borne diseases are present in Michigan every year and present a severe risk to human and animal health. Mosquito and tick control is one of the preventive public health practice foundations. This will be done by placing mosquito traps and conducting tick drags throughout Van Buren and Cass county. The program will also support public education on mosquito-borne disease prevention, mosquito control, and tick-borne disease prevention.

"It only takes one bite from an infected mosquito to cause a severe illness," said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy director for health at MDHHS. "We urge Michiganders to take precautions such as using an EPA-registered insect repellent when outdoors, avoiding areas where mosquitoes are present if possible and wearing clothing to cover arms and legs to prevent bites."

Residents can stay healthy by using simple, effective strategies to protect themselves and their families. The following steps are recommended to avoid the transmission and spread of mosquito and tick-borne illnesses



- Apply insect repellents that contain the active ingredient DEET, or other EPA-approved products to exposed skin or clothing. Always follow the manufacturer's directions for use.
- Wear light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. Apply insect repellent to clothing to help prevent bites.
- Maintain window and door screening to help keep mosquitoes and other bugs outside.
- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires or similar sites where mosquitoes lay eggs.
- Performing daily tick checks. This includes animals and equipment that were outside.

VBCDHD will be offering tick identification services on Mondays and Thursdays from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The service is offered to help community members identify the breed of tick, to help establish if it is capable of carrying a vector-borne disease. This service **CANNOT** decipher if the tick is actually infected with lyme disease. Please transport all ticks in a sealed bag.

Throughout the virus transmission season, surveillance information is posted to the Michigan Emerging Diseases website at www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases. For more information, please visit <https://vbcassdhd.org/environmental-health/mosquitoes-what-you-need-to-know/> or contact Environmental Sanitarian, Cody Davis at (269)621-3143 ext. 1317.

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