



## Washtenaw County Health Department

### For Immediate Release

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### **Tick and Mosquito Surveillance Program Launches in Washtenaw County**

*Residents encouraged to "Fight the Bite"*

YPSILANTI, Mich., June 15, 2022 – The Washtenaw County Health Department is participating in the Vector-Borne Disease Surveillance Program in partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). The Health Department will collect and identify mosquitoes and ticks to help understand local disease risk and contribute data to the statewide tracking system. Everyone is encouraged to enjoy the outdoors and to take steps to prevent tick and mosquito bites.

"The main goal of the program is to look for the types of mosquitoes and ticks that can spread illness. This helps us understand our local risk of mosquito- and tick-borne illnesses," says Kristen Schweighoefer, MPH, RS, environmental health director for the Washtenaw County Health Department. "We know that our changing climate can impact the presence of different disease vectors. Our work this summer will help us be proactive in protecting and informing our community."

Health Department staff have set up mosquito traps throughout the county, including in Ann Arbor Township, Lyndon Township, Pittsfield Township, Scio Township, Salem Township, and Webster Township. Mosquitoes of interest include *Aedes aegypti*, *A. albopictus*, *Culiseta melanura* and *Coquillettidia perturbans*, which can transmit Zika and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) virus, as well as other diseases. Mosquito traps will have Health Department signage. Residents are asked to please not disturb any traps found in the community.

Staff are conducting "tick drags" in several locations to collect ticks for identification and Lyme disease testing. Ticks of interest include deer ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*, also known as the blacklegged tick), which can spread Lyme and other diseases.

#### **Local data on mosquito and tick related illnesses**

Lyme disease is the most commonly reported vector-borne disease in the United States. Cases of Lyme in Washtenaw County more than doubled in 2021 at [54 reported cases](#) compared to previous years. Thirty-two of these cases were likely exposed to the Lyme bacteria in Washtenaw County.

Four Lone Star ticks (*Amblyomma americanum*) have been identified in Washtenaw County so far this year. Once relatively rare in Michigan, Lone Star ticks have started to be more common in the Lower Peninsula over the last decade. Lone Star ticks can transmit ehrlichiosis, tularemia, Bourbon virus, Heartland virus, and southern tick-associated rash illness (STARI), and may also be associated with alpha-gal syndrome (known as red meat allergy). Lone Star ticks do not transmit Lyme disease.

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Three travel-related cases of Zika were identified among Washtenaw residents in 2016. No confirmed cases of Zika among county residents have been identified since then. Although Zika mosquitoes have not yet been found in Washtenaw County, we know that other mosquito-related illnesses are spreading in our community. West Nile Virus has been active in our area since 2002, with local human or animal cases occurring nearly every year since then. Michigan experienced Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) activity in 2020 and 2021 but Washtenaw did not have any cases

### Preventing mosquito and tick bites

The Washtenaw County Health Department recommends the following precautions to prevent disease transmission from mosquitoes and ticks.

#### Mosquito bite prevention tips:

- Use insect repellent. To find a repellent that's right for you, use the Environmental Protection Agency's [insect repellent search tool](#).
- Wear long sleeves, shoes, and socks when outdoors.
- Repair screens to keep mosquitoes out of your home.
- Reduce mosquito breeding conditions by eliminating standing water around your home. Once a week, empty flowerpots, tires, barrels, and other items that can hold water.

#### Tick bite prevention tips:

- Check for ticks. Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held mirror, if necessary. Parents should check their children for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and especially in the hair.
- Use insect repellent with 20% or more DEET.
- Wear long sleeves, shoes, and socks when outdoors.
- Avoid wooded and bushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors after outdoor activities.
- Examine gear and pets for ticks.
- To remove a tick, use tweezers and grip the body firmly and pull straight out of the skin. Do not twist the tick. After removing the tick, clean the bite area and your hands. Ticks attached for fewer than 24 hours do not transmit disease.

### Tick Identification

MDHHS offers tick identification based on photos at no charge for Michigan residents. To submit a photo of a tick for identification, email the photo to [MDHHS-Bugs@michigan.gov](mailto:MDHHS-Bugs@michigan.gov) according to the instructions at <https://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases>. MDHHS does not offer tick testing for residents because the results do not predict infection. Instead, MDHHS suggests that if bitten by a tick, individuals should monitor for symptoms such as rash, fatigue, fever, etc. occurring within 30 days of the latest tick bite and/or visiting an area with ticks. Individuals should seek prompt medical attention should illness occur.

### Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

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Local public health information and updates are always available at [www.washtenaw.org/health](http://www.washtenaw.org/health). The Health Department also provides frequent social media updates (@wcpublichealth) and sends regular email updates, sign up at <http://bit.ly/WCHD555>.

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