News Release

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For Immediate Release

STATE OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE PLANS TO CONDUCT AERIAL SPRAYING FOR MOSQUITOES IN SECTIONS OF SOUTHEASTERN MASSACHUSETTS

BOSTON (August 6, 2019) – The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) today announced that aerial spraying for mosquitoes will take place in specific areas of southeastern Massachusetts. So far this year, 22 communities in southeastern Massachusetts have been found by DPH to be at high risk for the Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) virus.

EEE is a rare but serious and potentially fatal disease that can affect people of all ages. No human cases of EEE have been detected so far this year. The last human case of EEE in Massachusetts occurred in 2013.

MDAR will conduct and monitor aerial spraying in specific areas of Bristol and Plymouth counties which are anticipated to begin on Thursday, August 8, and continue over several evenings. However, the ability to spray is weather dependent and the schedule may change. Residents are encouraged to visit the DPH website at www.mass.gov/guides/aerial-mosquito-control-summer-2019 for the latest updates on

spraying in their communities. Officials will continue to monitor the area over the next two weeks and plan to conduct a second round of spraying to achieve maximal effectiveness.

“Based on the findings this year combined with our experience with EEE, it is important to use aerial spraying to help reduce public risk,” said Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH. “While aerial spraying can reduce the threat of mosquito-borne illness, it cannot eliminate the risk altogether.”

“Due to the current high risk levels in southeastern Massachusetts, the Commonwealth is taking action to protect public health by reducing the population of mosquitoes that transmit the EEE virus,” said MDAR Commissioner John Lebeaux. “As aerial sprays cannot completely eliminate the risk of EEE transmission, we ask the public to follow the personal protection practices suggested by DPH.”

“The swamp habitats that are the source of EEE activity are not accessible by truck-mounted ground sprayers and so aerial applications are warranted when the risk is this high,” said DPH State Epidemiologist Dr. Catherine Brown. “In addition to ground and aerial spraying, people have an important role to play in protecting themselves from mosquito bites.”

The pesticide used is called Anvil 10+10, a product extensively tested and used in both ground-level and aerial spraying in the U.S. to control mosquitoes. Anvil 10+10 contains two ingredients: Sumithrin and Piperonyl butoxid. Sumithrin is an ingredient similar to the natural components of the chrysanthemum flower which is also found in other pesticide products used indoors, in pet shampoos, and tick control treatments. Sumithrin is rapidly inactivated and decomposes with exposure to light and air, with a half-life of less than one day in the air and on plants. In soil, it degrades rapidly and has proven to be extremely effective in killing mosquitoes worldwide for over 20 years. Piperonyl butoxide serves to increase the ability of Sumithrin to kill mosquitoes.

There are no health risks expected during or after spraying. There is no evidence that aerial spraying of Anvil 10+10 will exacerbate certain health conditions, such as asthma or chemical sensitivity. No special precautions are recommended; however, residents can reduce exposure by staying indoors during spraying. Aerial spraying is not expected to have any impacts on surface water or drinking water.

Aerial spraying will be conducted in the nighttime hours when fish are less likely to be at the surface feeding and honeybees are most likely to be in their hives. However, owners should cover small ornamental fishponds during the night of spraying. While it is not necessary to bring animals indoors during spraying, keeping pets inside will minimize the risk of exposure.

Although the aerial spray is considered necessary to reduce human risk, it will not eliminate it. Residents must continue to protect themselves from mosquito bites by staying indoors during peak mosquito hours, applying insect repellent when outdoors, draining standing water where mosquitoes breed, repairing screens in doors and windows, and protecting pets.

For questions about aerial spraying, contact the MDAR Crop and Pest Services at (617) 626-1700.

For the most updated information on EEE risk and aerial spraying, contact the DPH Division of Epidemiology at (617) 983-6800 or visit the DPH website at www.mass.gov/guides/aerial-mosquito-control-summer-2019. For updated risk levels, mosquito results, maps and incidence of positive mosquito samples, visit www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito.

For questions about mosquito control in your city or town: Contact your local board of health (listed online or in the telephone directory under "government").

For general information about mosquito control, go to Mosquito Control Projects and Districts or contact the Bristol County Mosquito Control Project at (508) 823-5253 or the Plymouth County Mosquito Control Project at 781-585-5450.

For the media, a brief media availability is scheduled for 3:30 p.m. today with DPH State Epidemiologist Dr. Catherine Brown and MDAR Commissioner John Lebeaux at the State Public Health Laboratory, 305 South Street, Jamaica Plain.

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