

Protect against mosquito bites!

Background:

Mosquitoes carry and transmit human diseases including, in Massachusetts, the rare but very dangerous Eastern Equine Encephalitis. The virus is transmitted by mosquitoes from birds to mammals. There is an approved vaccine for horses but not for human beings. <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/eee-eastern-equine-encephalitis> EEE outbreaks normally occur every 10-20 years and continue for 2-3 years; there is some evidence that climate change may increase the frequency of outbreaks. Human cases are rare but almost always result in death or permanent disability. The last outbreak was in 2019-2020. There were no cases in 2021.

What we are doing about it:

In 2020, Shutesbury joined the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (PVMCD). Mosquitoes are trapped and identified; if they are of the species that carry human diseases they are sent to the state lab for testing. Thus far no mosquitoes of concern have been found. The PVMCD can also serve an advisory role and recommend actions to be taken if a problem arises; it does not implement or impose any actions.

But ...

The state, through the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board (SRMCB), has the authority to spray pesticides, aerially or

at ground level, if the Department of Public Health finds it necessary to protect human health. Municipalities may apply to opt out of mandatory spraying; Shutesbury has applied but has yet to learn whether the application is approved. The application includes the development of an alternative mosquito control plan, which consists mainly of public education.

There are four historical risk levels: remote, low, medium, and high. Shutesbury is rated “low” risk – except for the area around Lake Wyola, which is rated “medium” because of its proximity to Wendell and New Salem.

What you can do about it:

Eliminate mosquito breeding habitat on your own property. Mosquitoes breed in shallow, stagnant, dirty water. Dump this out wherever it collects. Don’t forget your gutters.

Avoid getting bitten. Indoors, make sure screens are intact and there are no gaps around doors and windows. For outdoor activities, there are many ingenious products and methods of avoiding mosquito bites. For a good overview, visit

<https://www.healthline.com/health/outdoor-health/how-to-prevent-mosquito-bites>

For information about the effectiveness and proper use of insect repellents, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/mosquitoes/mosquito-bites/prevent-mosquito-bites.html>

— The Shutesbury Board of Health, 6/11/22