

Protect your family from mosquito bites

With West Nile virus and Eastern equine encephalitis so firmly established throughout Rhode Island, the state Department of Environmental Management and the state Department of Health are reminding residents that personal protection is the first line of defense against mosquito-borne diseases.

Residents should routinely protect themselves from exposure to West Nile virus and EEE by avoiding mosquito bites and eliminating mosquito breeding grounds. Residents are urged to

rid their yards of anything that holds standing water where mosquitoes can breed. Just one cup can produce thousands of mosquitoes.

Personal protection and larviciding are cornerstones of the state's mosquito response program. Aerial or ground spraying is only recommended when the public is at substantial risk of contact by infected mosquitoes. The DEM will distribute the larvicide Altosid to municipalities for treating all public area catch basins.

Because horses are susceptible

to West Nile virus and EEE, Rhode Island horse owners should vaccinate their horses early in the season and take measures to control and prevent mosquito exposure.

The viruses

EEE, a cyclical virus, while not nearly as common as West Nile virus, has a higher fatality rate. The viral disease is contracted through the bite of an infected mosquito. In most years, the virus is limited to native bird populations and bird-biting mosquitoes, but occasionally the virus can be transmitted to humans and domestic animals. EEE virus affects the brain with symptoms that appear five to 15 days after being bitten. Symptoms may include high fever, headache, stiff neck, and decreased consciousness. Up to 50 percent of cases may result in fatality. People with symptoms suggesting EEE should contact their physician immediately.

West Nile virus is also a mosquito-transmitted viral disease that causes encephalitis.

However, mortality rates are much lower than those of EEE. Most people bitten by WNV-infected mosquitoes do not get sick. The elderly and people with weakened immune systems, however, are more prone to the infection. Symptoms begin three to 15 days after the bite from an infected mosquito. Symptoms may include fever, headache, nausea, rash, stiff neck, muscle weakness, and disorientation.

Watson farm exhibits at Statehouse

Wednesday, May 17, is Rhode Island Agriculture Day, which will be celebrated in the Statehouse rotunda from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Among the 27 exhibitors will be Don Minto of Watson Farm. Farms that produce oysters, maple syrup, milk, corn, and other crops will be featured at the show.

Sailing bash set for this weekend

Sail Newport, Rhode Island's Public Sailing Center, will host the Bermuda Bash fund-raiser on Saturday, May 13, at the Newport Yachting Center, from 8 p.m. to midnight.

The benefit for Sail Newport is a celebration of the centennial Bermuda ocean race, which starts off Newport on June 16. The gala is to benefit the public sailing programs for youths and adults at Sail Newport for the 2006 season.

Sail Newport Executive Director Brad Read says, "The long history of ocean racing to Bermuda deserves to be celebrated. The Bermuda Bash will honor the history of this prestigious race and raise funds to continue to train the sailors of the future."

The party will feature decorations in the elegantly tropical Bermuda style, entertainment by the popular reggae band Hot Like Fire, island hors d'oeuvres, and a cash bar, including Mt. Gay cocktails and Heineken. In addition, the evening will feature a silent auction with such items as a vacation in Bermuda at the Fairmont Hamilton Princess, an American Cruise Lines tour of the historic south, a week-long stay in a private villa in Manzanillo, Mexico, a trip to New York to see the Conan O'Brien Show taping at NBC Studios, art, jewelry, sailing gear, and other items.

In honor of the race, the Cruising Club of America will loan an historical photography exhibit of the prestigious race to display at the event. Also, local photographers Onne van der Wal and Billy Black will show Bermuda race shots from their many years of covering the event.

Dress for the event is "Bermuda cocktail attire," and jackets are requested. Tickets to the event cost \$55 for individual and \$500 for a "boatload" of 10. Call 846-1983, for more information.

Sidewalk art event set for May 20

A one-day sidewalk art extravaganza will be held at the parking lot of St. Matthew's church on Saturday, May 20, from noon to 4p.m. The rain date is May 27.

Artists of all ages can show off their talent in the parking lot, where each team or individual will create a pastel painting within a 4- by 4-foot square. Pastel chalk will be provided for each entry. No other medium may be used. However, artists may bring water and paintbrushes or sponges. Art work must be original. No offensive or copyrighted images can be used. In other words, no Sponge Bob or Batman, or Disney characters.

A prize of \$50 will be given in each category.

mother's day is may 14

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