NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Michigan Department of Health & Human Services Advises Precautionary Measures
to Prevent Human EEE Infection

Coldwater, MI – The Michigan Department of Health & Human Services reported yesterday an increase in cases of Eastern Equine Encephalitis in Southwest Michigan. Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) is a rare virus that is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. As of today, there have been no confirmed human cases of EEE in St. Joseph, Branch, or Hillsdale counties, but there have been 3 confirmed horse cases of the disease in St. Joseph county and all 3 of these animals have died. In Southwest Michigan there have been 7 human cases of EEE confirmed and 3 of these cases have died. The geographic area effected by EEE human cases includes the counties of Berrien, Cass, VanBuren, Kalamazoo, and Barry. MDHHS is encouraging local officials in these five Southwest Michigan counties and St. Joseph, Genesee, and Lapeer counties which have had animal cases of EEE, to consider postponing, rescheduling or cancelling outdoor activities occurring at or after dusk, particularly activities that involve children. This would include events such as late evening sports practices or games or outdoor music practices. This MDHHS recommendation is made out of an abundance of caution to protect the public health and applies until the first hard frost.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency concurs with the MDHHS recommendation. Rebecca Burns, Health Officer, reminds all residents of St. Joseph county to, “be vigilant about protecting yourself and your family members from mosquito bites, especially those 15 years old and younger and those that are 50 years old and older who are
more likely to develop a severe case of the EEE disease.” Michigan residents can stay healthy by following these steps to avoid mosquito bites:

- Apply insect repellents that contain the active ingredient DEET, or other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-registered product to exposed skin or clothing, and always follow the manufacturer’s directions for use.
- Wear 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 outside.
- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires, or similar sites where mosquitoes may lay eggs.
- Use nets and/or fans over outdoor eating areas.

For additional information and to learn about what the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency has to offer you and your family, see our new website at www.bhsj.org and follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/bhsjwic.

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