

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Tuesday, May 24, 2011, Peterborough

## Fighting the Bite

### *Health Unit Advises Residents to Protect Themselves This Summer from Insect-Spread Diseases*



Blacklegged ticks can carry  
Lyme Disease.

The Peterborough County-City Health Unit is encouraging local residents to take precautions against West Nile Virus (WNV), Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and Lyme Disease.

The Health Unit 2011 Vector Borne Disease Program will include: mosquito surveillance by trapping mosquitoes to test them for both WNV and EEE; mosquito control by larviciding catch basins in Peterborough City and County; and public education on ways to reduce mosquito breeding sites and ways to avoid being bitten. The Health Unit will also respond to complaints from local residents about

standing water and enforce the City of Peterborough by-law which states that standing water may not be present for more than four days on any property. The Health Unit is also encouraging residents to submit ticks found on their body for identification and testing.

**West Nile Virus** is a disease that anyone can get from the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes can transmit the virus after becoming infected by feeding on the blood of wild birds, which are the main carriers of the disease. WNV cannot be transmitted by human-to-human contact.

**Eastern Equine Encephalitis** is a mosquito-borne virus. It is currently found in the eastern United States, where it causes disease in humans, horses, and some bird species. Although some people experience it only as a mild illness, EEE is fatal in about one-third of cases. While EEE virus-positive mosquitoes, horses, and emus have occurred in the Ontario in recent years, no human cases have yet been reported in Canada.

**Lyme disease** is spread through the bite of an infected blacklegged tick. The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) tracks Lyme disease trends in Ontario based

## Communications Office

Peterborough County-City Health Unit  
10 Hospital Drive  
Peterborough, ON K9J 8M1  
(705) 743-1000, ext. 391  
[www.pcchu.ca](http://www.pcchu.ca)



on investigation of confirmed cases as well as blacklegged tick surveillance and testing conducted in endemic areas throughout the province. Identifying the geographic area of exposure is important to determine the level of risk in PCCHU. The MOHLTC warns that, although the potential risk is low, it is possible for an individual to be bitten by an infected blacklegged tick almost anywhere in the province as infected ticks are often carried by migratory birds.

For the best protection against West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis, the Health Unit recommends the following:

- Wear proper clothing (cover bare skin whenever possible)
- Use insect repellents: those that contain DEET most effective
- Stay indoors at peak times (dawn and dusk)
- Make sure there are no holes in window screens
- Remove water from common areas of mosquito breeding, such as birdbaths, old tires, rain barrels, wading/children's pools, gutters/eaves troughs, clogged drainage ditches, cans, bottle tops and children's toys.

For the best protection against Lyme Disease, the Health Unit recommends the following,

- Wear light-coloured clothing. It makes ticks easier to see and remove before they can attach to feed
- Wear long pants and a long sleeved shirt
- Wear closed footwear and socks
- Tuck your pants into your socks
- Use a tick repellent that has DEET (following the manufacturer's directions for use). Apply it to your skin and outer clothing. Avoid your eyes and mouth, as well as cuts and scrapes

Eliminating standing water is an important tactic in West Nile Virus prevention to reduce mosquito breeding, especially in urban settings. In fact, the species of mosquito most responsible for the spread of the disease is most commonly found in the urban environment.

-30-

### **For further information, please contact:**

Dylan Mahoney  
Vector Borne Disease Prevention Program  
Peterborough County-City Health Unit  
705-743-1000, ext. 340