



## **WESTERN EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS VIRUS DISEASE (WEE) FACT SHEET**

### **WHAT IS WEE?**

Western Equine Encephalitis Virus Disease (WEE) is a rare disease that is caused by a virus spread by infected mosquitoes. WEE can cause inflammation of the brain (encephalitis). Most cases of western equine encephalitis virus have been reported from the plains regions of the western and central United States

### **HOW DO YOU GET WEE?**

WEE is spread to people and horses through the bite of a mosquito infected with the virus. WEE is normally maintained between *Culex tarsalis* mosquitoes and birds. People and horses are bitten by *Culex tarsalis* during the late summer months (mid-July through early September).

### **SYMPTOMS**

Most people infected with WEE virus will have no symptoms or a very mild illness. It takes 5 to 10 days to develop symptoms after the bite of an infected mosquito. Some infected individuals may develop encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Other symptoms may include:

- High fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Muscle pain
- Lack of energy

### **TREATMENT**

There is no specific treatment for WEE— care is based on symptoms. Discuss treatment options with your doctor

### **PREVENTION**

The best method to avoid infection is to prevent mosquito bites:

- Dump standing water around your home once a week.
- Use insect repellent.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use screens on windows and doors.
- Repair any holes.

### **DPHD EFFORTS:**

Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the Delaware Public Health District (DPHD). The DPHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education. The DPHD regularly traps and tests mosquito populations and fog areas where human disease is confirmed.