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Maine Health Alert Network (HAN) System

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: Health Care Providers
From: Dr. Isaac Benowitz, State Epidemiologist
Subject: **Local Powassan Virus and West Nile Virus Activity**
Date / Time: Tuesday, July 29, 2025, at 2:00PM
Priority: Normal
Pages: 2
Message ID: 2025PHADV019

Local Powassan Virus and West Nile Virus Activity

Summary

Powassan virus (POW) has been detected in a Maine resident in Hancock County and West Nile Virus has been detected in a bird in York County. These are both the first detections of those infections in Maine in 2025. The Maine CDC is sending this Health Alert Network (HAN) Health Advisory to alert clinicians to local arboviral disease activity and to remind clinicians to consider testing for mosquito-borne and tickborne arboviruses in patients with unexplained fever, meningitis, or encephalitis, particularly among persons with outdoor exposure or recent travel to areas with known arboviral transmission.

Background

Mosquitoes and ticks can spread arboviruses (arthropod-borne viruses) to people and animals:

- Mosquitoes in Maine can transmit viruses including Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), Jamestown Canyon Virus (JCV), and West Nile Virus (WNV).
- Ticks in Maine can transmit both lineages of Powassan Virus (Lineage 1 Powassan Virus and Lineage 2 Deer Tick Virus).
- Human infections with any of these viruses can be severe and fatal.

The recently identified human case of POW developed neuroinvasive disease in late May and was hospitalized. The U.S. CDC confirmed the Powassan result in this individual following neutralization testing of the clinical specimen. This individual acquired the infection in Maine.

Additionally, the Maine CDC recently confirmed WNV in a crow in York County. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife collected the crow on July 16, 2025, and it tested positive at Maine's

Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) this week. This is the first WNV detection in a non-human in 2025, and there are no reported human cases of WNV in 2025 to date.

EEE and WNV are often seen in birds and mosquitoes prior to human infections. Human infections with mosquito-borne diseases are more likely to occur in areas where mosquitoes are active. People can get POW from ticks in Maine at any time of the year, and this is most common in areas with deer tick activity. Please be vigilant for suspected mosquito-borne and tickborne arbovirus infections in patients, particularly in patients presenting with neuroinvasive symptoms of unclear etiology.

Symptoms

Most arboviral diseases have similar symptoms. While most people infected by arboviruses are asymptomatic, clinical presentations can be either neuroinvasive or non-neuroinvasive.

- Non-neuroinvasive (mild): fever, headache, fatigue, muscle aches, and neck stiffness.
- Neuroinvasive (severe): vomiting, ataxia, aphasia, encephalitis, meningitis, confusion, altered mental status, convulsions, seizures, paresis/paralysis, coma, and death.

Incubation periods range from 1 day to 5 weeks after a bite from an infected mosquito or tick, depending on the virus. Case fatality rates vary from 10–50% depending on the virus and clinical presentation.

Testing

Clinicians can refer to the Arboviral Testing in Maine guidance for more information on testing. (See attached guidance document.)

If testing through HETL, both the HETL [Requisition Form](#) and [Arboviral Submission Form](#) are required for testing.

Treatment

Treatment of arboviral infections is supportive.

Reporting

All arboviral illnesses are reportable in Maine. All suspected cases and positive laboratory reports should be reported by electronic laboratory reporting, or by phone (if immediately notifiable) to the 24/7 disease reporting and consultation line at 1-800-821-5821. EEE is immediately notifiable.

Additional Information

- The Maine CDC weekly arboviral surveillance reports: www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/data-reports/diseases/animal-and-insect-borne-diseases/arboviral-surveillance-reports
- The Maine CDC mosquitoes and ticks website: www.maine.gov/dhhs/vectorborne
- HETL clinical forms and submission instructions: www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/health-professionals/professional-testing-services/clinical-microbiology/submitting-samples
- The U.S. CDC tickborne disease reference manual for clinicians: www.cdc.gov/ticks/media/pdfs/2025/03/tickborne-diseases-manual-508.pdf
- The Maine CDC disease reporting and consultation line: 1-800-821-5821 (available 24/7)