



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **TEAMWORK, SIMPLE PRECAUTIONS HELP RESIDENTS, PETS ‘BLOCK THE BITE’ OF INSECTS**

**ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO** – The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) reports](#) that tick- and mosquito-borne illness cases tripled, and nine new insect-spread diseases were discovered between 2004 and 2016. A team effort between residents and the St. Charles County Division of Environmental Health and Protection can help to “Block the Bite” and reduce the risk for exposure to insect bites and related illnesses.

### **Precautions to Protect St. Charles County Residents**

Residents should take responsibility to protect themselves and their families by following these simple precautions to minimize exposure.

- Use insect repellent when outdoors. An insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, IR355 or oil of lemon eucalyptus is proven to provide protection when used according to manufacturer’s instructions. Remember to apply sunscreen first, let it dry, and then use insect repellent.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. When traveling in areas known for ticks and mosquitoes, including tall grass and wet or wooded settings, wear long sleeve shirts and long pants.
- Brush clothing and check for insects after being outside. Ticks prefer to settle in dark, warm areas like hair, behind ears, or along the armpits, groin or back of the knees. Remove [all ticks you find immediately](#), using tweezers to ensure you remove the entire insect. The longer a tick is attached, the greater the risk for infection.
- Eliminate potential breeding grounds around the home by draining areas where water settles, cleaning clogged gutters, removing trash and debris from yards, and disrupting fountains, ponds or bird baths. Keep lawns trimmed short to minimize habitat.

### **Signs and Symptoms of Insect-Borne Disease**

Instances of serious illnesses related to bites are rare, but West Nile virus, Ehrlichiosis, Bourbon virus and other emerging illnesses are present in insects throughout Missouri and other parts of the United States. Symptoms of these and other insect-borne illnesses are similar to those of the flu — including fever, head and body aches, fatigue, nausea/vomiting and a rash. If residents or pets display flu-like symptoms during the summer months, and there is a possibility of an insect bite, please consult a medical provider or veterinarian for further attention.

**(MORE)**

## **(PREVENT INSECT BITES - PAGE TWO)**

### **Precautions to Protect Pets**

Pet owners also must do their part to protect their animals, as bites from mosquitoes, ticks and other insects can cause short- and long-term problems for dogs and cats.

- Never put insect repellent intended for humans on animals. Purchase products specifically for animals and follow directions on the package. Make sure the product chosen is appropriate for your pet, as certain products can be harmful if used improperly.
- Keep pets away from common insect habitat areas, including tall grass and wooded settings.
- Be vigilant in checking for ticks and other insects when the animal returns from the outdoors. Rub your fingers through the fur, checking for small bumps and dark colors. Common places to find insects on pets include behind the ears, in armpits, between toes, under collars and on the belly.
- Remove any tick quickly and completely, using tweezers to be certain to remove the entire body.
- Contact a veterinarian if the animal displays unusual behaviors such as stiffness or joint pain, loss of appetite, difficulty breathing, fever, fatigue, vomiting, or diarrhea.

### **Precautions Taken by St. Charles County Mosquito Control**

The Division of Environmental Health and Protection Mosquito Control treatment zones include unincorporated St. Charles County, as well as within the city limits of the following contracted municipalities: Augusta, Cottleville, Dardenne Prairie, Flint Hill, Lake Saint Louis, Portage des Sioux, St. Paul, Weldon Spring, Weldon Spring Heights and Wentzville. Mosquito control staff treats habitat areas with larvicide to prevent development and sprays targeted areas with insecticide to minimize adult populations.

The division continues to study the local mosquito population with its collection and assessment program. Staff traps mosquitoes at various sites around St. Charles County and examines them to establish the species commonly found. Confirming the type of mosquitoes in our community enables staff to better treat populations, as various species behave differently and are active at different times of the day. Additionally, the collection allows staff to test individual insects for the presence of diseases.

Please visit the [Mosquito Control website](#) for more information.

### **Requests for Treatment**

Residents who live in our treatment zones and are concerned about nuisance mosquitoes should use [the division's online portal](#) to register and request assistance. Residents who do not have access to the internet can call 636-949-1800 for service. Residents living within the city limits of O'Fallon, St. Charles and St. Peters should contact their respective city halls for treatment concerns.

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### **About the St. Charles County Department of Public Health**

*Through the efforts of its three divisions — Environmental Health and Protection, Health Services and Humane Services — the St. Charles County Department of Public Health provides a wide range of services that enhance the well-being of the community. To learn how the department assists this region or to find out about volunteer opportunities with any of the divisions, visit [www.sccmo.org/PublicHealth](http://www.sccmo.org/PublicHealth) or call 636-949-7400.*

*Throughout the year, the Division of Environmental Health and Protection works with residents, area businesses and local organizations to promote healthy conditions in St. Charles County. The division inspects and licenses public service providers, operates a robust recycling program and implements the county's mosquito control measures. To learn how the division helps to ensure the community's well-being please call 636-949-1800 or visit [www.sccmo.org/environmental](http://www.sccmo.org/environmental).*