



# KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

In the Pursuit of Extraordinary Governance...

**NEWS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
October 2, 2019

Lyndi Warner, Public Information Officer  
pio@kalcounty.com  
269-373-5271 or 269-373-5270

## **Kalamazoo County's Communication Timeline Regarding EEE Aerial Spraying Treatment**

KALAMAZOO, MI – On the morning of September 27, 2019, Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department (HCS), along with thirteen other county health departments, endorsed the strong recommendation from Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) to perform aerial spraying of insecticide to reduce adult mosquito populations given the ongoing risk of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) infection in Kalamazoo County. This decision to opt in by HCS was made to reduce the ongoing public health risk of exposure to mosquitoes that can carry EEE. The timeline of communication to the public on that date is as follows:

- MDHHS issued a press release at 12:15 p.m. regarding the decision of aerial spraying being conducted by fourteen (14) counties to combat mosquito-borne disease. MDHHS press release indicated that the spraying was scheduled to take place starting Sunday, September 29 at 8:00 p.m.
- HCS issued a press release at 12:30 p.m. announcing the decision to opt in for aerial spraying in Kalamazoo County, which included MDHHS press release and announced a scheduled press conference by HCS for 3:00 p.m.
- MDHHS created a "Frequently Asked Questions" document to answer resident questions regarding EEE, the spraying plan, and the insecticide chosen, Merus 3.0. The FAQ document was shared on the Kalamazoo County website as well as the HCS Facebook page at approximately 12:45 p.m. The FAQ document addresses the question, "Can residents opt out of the aerial spraying?". Under State law with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) residents must be notified 48 hours prior to any insecticide application on property allowing residents the choice to opt out of the application.
- HCS held a press conference at 3:00 p.m. where EEE, merus 3.0 and the opt out option was discussed.
- On the HCS Facebook page at 4:05 p.m. a post was made specifically regarding the opt-out option and how residents could exercise their rights under the State law with MDARD.

On the morning of September 30, 2019, MDHHS notified HCS that the number of resident opt-out notifications received by MDHHS comprised a large enough geographic distribution in which aerial spraying would no longer

---

**HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

311 E. Alcott St. | Kalamazoo, MI 49001

Phone: 269.373.5200 | [www.kalcounty.com/hcs](http://www.kalcounty.com/hcs)

be an effective measure to reduce adult mosquito populations in Kalamazoo County. Despite the distribution of known human and animal cases, Kalamazoo County was unable to continue with the aerial spraying plan.

“Due to the large amount of residents who have chosen to exercise their option to opt out under the MDARD law, aerial application of insecticide will no longer be an effective treatment option for Kalamazoo County.” said James Rutherford, Health Officer Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services.

EEE is one of the most dangerous mosquito-borne diseases in the United States, with a 33 percent fatality rate in people who become ill. People can be infected with EEE from the bite of a mosquito carrying the viruses. Persons younger than age 15 and over age 50 are at greatest risk of severe disease following infection.

HCS continues to urge Kalamazoo County residents to protect themselves from mosquito bites due to the ongoing health risk of exposure to EEE. The best way to prevent EEE or any other mosquito-borne illness is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Avoid outdoor activities from dusk until dawn (7:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.) when mosquitos that carry EEE virus are most active. If outdoor activities are necessary, please take the following precautions:

- Apply EPA registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus or para-menthane-diol, and 2-undecanone; follow the product label instructions and reapply as directed.
  - Don't use repellent on children under 2 months old. Instead dress your child in clothing that covers arms and legs and cover crib, stroller and baby carrier with mosquito netting.
- Wear shoes and socks, light-colored long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors.
- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings.
- Use bed nets when sleeping outdoors or in conditions with no window screens.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding around your home, including water in bird baths, abandoned swimming pools, wading pools, old tires and any other object holding water once a week.
- Use nets and/or fans over outdoor eating areas

Signs of EEE infection include the sudden onset of fever, chills, body and joint aches which can progress to a severe encephalitis, resulting in headache, disorientation, tremors, seizures and paralysis. Anyone who thinks they may be experiencing these symptoms should contact a medical provider. Permanent brain damage, coma and death may also occur in some cases.

As of October 2, EEE has been confirmed in nine people, with four fatalities. Cases are in Barry, Berrien, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo and Van Buren counties. In addition, cases have occurred in 33 animals from 15 counties: Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Calhoun, Cass, Genesee, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Kent, Lapeer, Livingston, Montcalm, Newaygo, St. Joseph and Van Buren. The mosquitos that spread EEE are still active and were caught in traps set October 1 in southwest Michigan.

To help combat this deadly disease, the state is providing aerial treatment in areas of risk. On October 1, about 86,016 acres were treated. This brings the total treated acreage to 186,146. Areas completed to date as identified on the [Area Treatment Zones Map](#) include Area 3-1 in Berrien County, Areas 5-1 and 5-2 in Cass

County, Areas 12-1, 12-2 and 12-3 in St. Joseph County and 13-1 in Van Buren County. Area 2-1 in Barry County has been partially completed. Areas not yet completed will be included in future schedules.

More information about EEE are available at [www.michigan.gov/EEE](http://www.michigan.gov/EEE).

*Press release 7 of 7 issued by HCS regarding EEE.*

###

Kalamazoo County Government  
Health & Community Services Department

 [Like Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services](#)  Follow us [@KzooHealth](#)