



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## This Summer: Tips for Beating the Bugs

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### **Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column**

With the recent warm weather and sunny skies, many people in the Central and Northern New York region have been spending the bulk of their summer days—and nights—outside. While there's nothing like enjoying the outdoors, it's important to protect yourself from mosquitoes looking to take a bite out of your summer fun.

Eastern Equine Encephalitis, commonly known as EEE, is a rare but serious viral disease spread by mosquitoes. There are typically 5-10 human cases in the United States annually; with people over the age of 50 and under the age of 15 at the greatest risk of serious infection. EEE is much more common in horses and has resulted in deaths of dozens of horses in our region in recent years.

This year—for the second year in a row—I was able to secure special funding in the State Budget for an “Eastern Equine Encephalitis Program,” aimed at paying costs of aerial spraying to control mosquitoes, funding a low-cost horse vaccination program and supporting educational outreach to communities affected by the disease.

Last year, through similar funding, nearly 2,000 horses Upstate New York were protected through a program which provided low-cost vaccines for farmers and horse owners. In addition, more than 3,000 free larvicide treatments were distributed to private landowners and countless numbers of people were provided with tips to help “fight the bite” through my educational outreach program. While these programs have helped us take significant strides against diseases like EEE, experts agree that the best protection is keeping mosquitoes from biting you in the first place. Here are a few of the best ways to safeguard yourself:

- ***Use insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus.*** And, it goes without saying that you should remember to always follow all directions and precautions on the product label.
- ***Wear long-sleeves and pants.*** Mosquitoes can bite through thin clothing, so spraying repellent on clothes can help.
- ***Be aware of peak mosquito hours.*** Dusk to dawn are peak biting hours, but some mosquitoes bite all day. Consider staying indoors when mosquitoes are most active.
- ***Fix your screens.*** Mosquitoes can enter your home through rips and tears in screens and open windows.
- ***Drain standing water.*** Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water, in flower pots, buckets, bird baths, clogged gutters and yard debris.

There’s still a lot of summer left, and it’s my hope that in the days to come, you’ll take the necessary steps to protect yourself—and your loved ones—from mosquitoes and diseases like EEE.