



West Nile Virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis and Hunters

Is there a risk of getting infected with West Nile virus (WNV) or Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) if I eat turkey or another animal that has been infected with the virus?

There is no evidence that people can become infected with WNV or EEE from eating infected meat. The small, theoretical risk of infection can be eliminated by proper handling and thorough cooking of meat before it is consumed. Several well-known and potentially serious food-borne illnesses can occur when turkey and other meats are improperly handled or undercooked. For more information on food safety, please see: <http://www.cdc.gov.foodsafety/>.

What is known about the risk of WNV/EEE infection from dried, uncooked meat (jerky)?

There are no published studies that directly address this question. Most studies indicate that while mammals can become infected with both WNV and EEE, they do not develop high concentrations of virus in their blood or tissues. Although it is unlikely that dried meat from mammals would have much virus present, and probable that gastrointestinal digestion would further limit the possibility of infectiousness, there is insufficient evidence to determine whether dried meat presents a risk of WNV/EEE infection to humans or other animals. If you have questions about this topic it may be advisable to contact local wildlife authorities and/or health authorities to find out whether the area where the animal was harvested has WNV/EEE activity, and whether animals of the species in question were affected.

Are duck and other wild game hunters at risk for WNV/EEE infection?

Because of their outdoor exposure, game hunters may be at risk if they are bitten by mosquitoes in areas with WNV/EEE activity. The extent to which these viruses may be present in wild game is unknown.

What should wild game hunters do to protect against WNV/EEE infection?

Hunters should follow the usual precautions when handling wild animals. If they anticipate being exposed to mosquitoes, they should apply insect repellent to clothing and skin, according to label instructions, to prevent mosquito bites. Hunters should wear gloves when handling and cleaning animals to prevent blood exposure to bare hands and meat should be cooked thoroughly.

Who should wild game hunters contact for information about the risk for WNV/EEE infection in specific geographic areas?

Hunters should check with their local area department of wildlife and naturalist resources, state epidemiologist at the state health department, or the US Geological Survey (USGS) National Wildlife Health Center, Madison, WI, 608-270-2400 for information on local area risk.

**For more information, call the
New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services,
WNV/EEE Info line, at 1-866-273-NILE (6453).**

**For health care providers with clinical questions or to report human
probable cases please contact the Bureau of Communicable Disease
Control at 1-800-852-3345 ext. 4496**