

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## No Threat Of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) Mosquito Virus In USVI, Dept. of Health Says

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The Department of Health in a release issued Monday said that Virgin Islands residents should not be concerned with a mosquito-borne virus called Eastern Equine Encephalitis, also known as "EEE" or "Triple E".

"Some Virgin Islands residents have expressed concern about a rare mosquito-borne illness called Eastern Equine Encephalitis, also known as Triple E or EEE, that is currently affecting certain areas of the United States," D.O.H. said.

Triple E, also known as the sleeping sickness, is a zoonotic alphavirus and arbovirus present in North, Central, and South America, and the Caribbean. EEE was first

recognized in Massachusetts, United States, in 1831, when 75 horses died mysteriously of viral encephalitis. In Florida, about one to two human cases are reported a year, although over 60 cases of equine encephalitis are reported. In years in which conditions are favorable for the disease, the number of equine cases is over 200.

“The Virgin Islands Department of Health would like residents to know that they are not at risk for Triple E in USVI because the mosquito that maintains the virus in the natural environment has never been found in USVI”, Dr. Brett Ellis Director, territorial public health laboratory, said in a statement. “The primary disease vector for the territory is the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which does not spread Triple E.”

A vector is an animal that has the ability to spread diseases. In the territory, the D.O.H.'s Vector Control Program (VCP) is currently monitoring the vector *Aedes aegypti*, a mosquito responsible for spreading dengue, Zika, and chikungunya. The Dept. of Health's VCP is currently expanding these monitoring efforts throughout the territory to learn more about this mosquito and figure out the most effective ways to control it. For this reason, residents may see more vector control personnel setting mosquito traps and performing other control activities throughout the territory, D.O.H. said.

There are currently no dengue, Zika, or chikungunya cases in the territory, with the last Zika case occurring in January of 2018, according to the department.

D.O.H. said residents are encouraged to always wear EPA-approved mosquito repellent, loose-fitting and light-colored clothing, and to keep screens on windows and doors in good repair to protect themselves from mosquito bites.

Those planning travel outside of the territory are advised to wear EPA-approved mosquito repellent and loose-fitting and light-colored clothing. More information for concerned travelers can be found on the Center for Disease Control Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

Individuals with questions or concerns about mosquito-borne diseases or VIDOH VCP activities are invited to call the VIDOH Vector Control Program at (340)690-9177 or send an email [todohvectorcontrol@usvi.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:todohvectorcontrol@usvi.onmicrosoft.com).