

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

September 4, 2024

The Honorable Dr. Mandy Cohen
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

Dear Dr. Cohen:

Following recent reports of Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus (EEEV) and West Nile Virus (WNV) in humans, horses and mosquitoes across the Northeastern United States, I am writing to draw your attention to the proliferation of EEEV and WNV across New York State (NYS), express my deep concern about the dangers these deadly mosquito-borne diseases present to New Yorkers, and strongly urge action from the CDC to protect concerned residents across NYS from Hempstead to Potsdam and Albany to Buffalo.

So far in 2024, the NYS Department of Health (DOH) has confirmed at least 20 human cases of WNV and 1,868 WNV-positive mosquito pools, including at least 3 human WNV cases, 1 horse WNV case, and 226 WNV-positive mosquito pools across Upstate NY. Although no human cases of EEEV have been reported in NYS this year, the NYS DOH has confirmed the presence of at least fourteen cases of EEEV in horses across ten Upstate NY counties, including St. Lawrence, Madison, Oneida, Cayuga, Orange, Ulster, Wayne, Washington, Clinton, and Franklin, as well as at least nineteen EEEV-positive mosquito pools. To date, all reported cases of EEEV and EEEV-positive mosquito pools have been located in Upstate NY. Currently, the epicenter for EEEV has been in St. Lawrence County where 5 horses have contracted the virus. In response to the rise in cases, Governor Hochul recently declared an “Imminent Threat to Public Health” in the county.

Since there are no vaccines or treatments currently available for EEEV, it is of the utmost importance to prevent transmission to humans and encourage counties take all precautionary measures to protect their residents. EEEV is fatal in about 30% of people who are affected by it, and survivors also report experiencing neurologic problems. The disease can worsen quickly, with symptoms at the onset often including fever, headache and stiff neck, which all potentially lead to severe swelling of the brain, called encephalitis, the most serious complication.

After a 41-year old New Hampshire man recently contracted and died from EEEV mere hours from the NYS line, concern across the state is rapidly reaching a fever pitch. With no time to waste, I strongly urge the CDC to act without delay and furnish my office with a plan outlining how the agency will coordinate with state, county and local officials in NYS to warn health care providers, public health officials and the broader community about the dangers of EEEV and WNV. Additionally, please highlight any CDC efforts that are already underway to spread awareness about this mosquito-borne disease, and explain what the agency’s capacity is to respond to additional human cases of EEEV and WNV.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter as we continue to defend the health of New Yorkers across the state. I look forward to receiving and reviewing the CDC's plan as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles Schumer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Charles" and last name "Schumer" clearly distinguishable.

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator