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For Immediate release

Powassan Virus Awareness

(Hardyston, N.J., June 7th, 2019) The Sussex County Division of Health (SCDOH) is currently investigating two confirmed cases of the Powassan virus in the county. Regretfully, in one of the cases, the Division can confirm that a Sussex County resident passed away during the course of an illness. The SCDOH, however, cannot confirm that the Powassan virus was the primary cause of death. The Sussex County Division of Health expresses its sincere condolences to our resident's family.

While rare, the Powassan Virus is spread by the bite of an infected black legged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) or deer tick. Many infected with the Powassan virus do not develop any symptoms but some may experience fever, headache, swelling of the brain (encephalitis), swelling of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord (meningitis), vomiting, weakness, confusion, loss of coordination, trouble speaking and memory loss. Certain members of our community are at greater risk for developing complications from the Powassan virus if other medical conditions exist. It is important to seek medical attention if symptoms develop. The virus cannot be spread from person to person.

As with other tick borne illnesses, there is no vaccine for the Powassan virus. Thus, the Division strongly urges our residents to take preventative measures for themselves and loved ones against ticks.

These include: https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/on_people.html

- Know where ticks are - ticks live in or near wooded or grassy areas
- Always walk in the center of trails to avoid contact with ticks
- Keep your yard clean - mow lawns, clear brush and remove leaf litter
- Apply insecticides - use EPA- registered repellent with DEET on skin and permethrin on clothing, boots, and camping gear
- Cover up - wear long sleeves and pants tucked into socks
- Inspect: check your body for ticks
- Shower after spending time outdoors to help find and wash off unattached ticks

An infected tick must be attached to an individual for several hours before it can transmit the virus. A tick found crawling on a person that has not attached, has not had the time to cause infection.

For more information, please visit the New Jersey Department of Health at <https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/powassan.shtml>, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention at <https://www.cdc.gov/powassan/>.