



July 3, 2015

RESIDENTIAL MOSQUITO CONTROL

With all the flooded fields this year and pools of water in farm fields and pools of water in back yards, mosquitoes are ready to come to the party. Most live and die close to where they hatch. Just a few tablespoons of water for four days in a flower pot or most any object will do. Within 24 hours after hatching a female mosquito seeks out that first meal. Only female mosquitoes possess piercing-sucking mouthparts and require a blood meal to produce viable eggs. Eggs are laid in batches between blood meals. A single female may deposit several hundred eggs in her lifetime. Under favorable conditions, a new generation of mosquitoes can be completed in less than a week.

Nothing spoils outdoor activities quicker than being swarmed by mosquitoes. Remember this tip. Backyard or acreage mosquito control with insecticide treatments alone will take much effort with limited results unless treatments are repeated every day or two. There is some effect 3 hours before a gathering.

Homeowners can be most effective in mosquito control by eliminating mosquito breeding areas that catch and hold water. Check for leaf-clogged gutters, puddles, bird baths, old tires, cans, bottles, lagoons, and children's wading pools. Drain water from these when practical. Rinse out your bird bath weekly.

Still water in birdbaths, ponds or lagoons may also be treated with *Bacillus thuringiensis*, or Bt, in the form of biscuits, typically available at garden and hardware stores. The sustained release of the active ingredients of these products may provide up to 30 days control of mosquito larvae. These products specifically attack mosquito larvae and will not harm fish or birds or wildlife that drink the water.

Because mosquitoes are attracted to CO₂ that we exhale, the most sensible and inexpensive way to prevent mosquito bites is to use an insect repellent, containing DEET (diethyl-toluamide). Products containing DEET are available in many concentrations that range from lotions, gels, aerosols, creams, and sticks. It is even possible to purchase moist towelettes containing DEET that can be put in a backpack, purse or glove box, just for emergencies. For children use DEET at 10% or less active ingredient. In special cases with skin sensitivity it makes sense to spray clothing instead. Be sure to read and follow label directions when using personal repellents. What about Avon Skin So Soft, have you ever tried it? Unfortunately, laboratory tests show it is about 10 times less effective than 12.5% DEET.

Electric bug zappers don't work so well either. Tests have shown only about 1% of the bugs zapped are mosquitoes and numerous beneficial insects are killed by these devices. Ultrasonic devices are another idea that are marketed. Studies indicate they don't deter the bites and mosquitoes don't flee from the sound.

Mosquito traps are expensive to buy and maintain for the benefit received according to UNL experts. They are best used as perimeter devices and consumer reports are mixed especially with army regiments of mosquitoes in your area.

For temporary relief before a big party or gathering, spray lawns, flowers, shrubs and small trees (resting areas) about three hours before the event and first check the label for any plant toxicity issues. If you don't spray, have DEET handy or prepare to move indoors. Citronella candles or torches and the barbeque smoke itself can help. The effects of the spray are immediate and phase out after a few days.



Insecticides labeled for this purpose include Permethrins, Bifenthrins (Talstar, Maxxthor, Capture, Brigade, Bifenthrine, and Ortho Home Defense Max), Lambda-Cyhalothrins (Karate, Matador, Demand, Triazicide, Hot Shot, Real Kill, and Spectracide Bug Off) and Cyfuthrins (Tempo, Bayer Advanced Insect control). I listed a few common names as examples, there are numerous others and no endorsement of a specific product is intended.

Keep porch lights off as much as possible in the evening. Or, replace traditional white light bulbs with yellow ones to help reduce the attractiveness of your home to mosquitoes and other night-flying insects.

The clothing you wear has a big impact too. For more complete information, go to our NebGuide at <http://ow.ly/P4b71> or find this publication on our front page <http://saline.unl.edu>

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