

## **Extension Update**

Author: Sarah Purcell, Extension Educator

Phone: 402-269-2301

### **The 2019 Mosquito Season**

Nebraska's mosquito season has started. This summer has the potential for extremely high populations of mosquitoes, as you probably have already noticed!

The extreme flooding and the abundance of rain has left us standing water, which is an excellent habitat for Nebraska's two most abundant mosquitoes, *Aedes vexans* and *Culex tarsalis*. Female mosquitoes emerging from pools of standing water can travel up to several miles in search of blood for nourishment.

Host-finding behavior in mosquitoes involves odors, vision, and body warmth. Vision is especially important for daytime biting mosquitoes with dark, contrasting, and moving objects being the most attractive. Once a host is found, it usually takes from one to four minutes for the female mosquito to enjoy a full blood meal.

Besides their annoyance, *Aedes* and *Culex* mosquitoes in Nebraska can transmit West Nile and other encephalitis viruses. Because of this, you should protect yourself from mosquito bites. Horses and dogs also need protection from mosquito transmitted diseases to protect their health.

Several effective and safe steps can be taken to protect yourself from mosquito bites.

Limit your outdoor activities during the morning and evening hours when mosquitoes are most active. Work outdoors when there is a breeze or sunlight.

If you must be outdoors during the morning or evening, wear a light colored, long-sleeved shirt and long pants to protect yourself. Keep in mind that mosquitoes can bite through thin cloth.

Repellents can be used to help deter mosquitoes from biting you. DEET-based repellents are available in various concentrations that will provide protection from 90 minutes to 10 hours.

A product containing 10 to 30 percent DEET should be adequate for most people. For children, it is best to use a concentration of DEET of 10 percent or less. Avoid applying high concentration DEET products of 50 percent or more on your skin.

Before using any insect control product, please read and follow label instructions. Consult your veterinarian for dog and horse protection options.

Removing mosquito development areas is also an important aspect of protecting yourself from mosquito bites especially following flooding or heavy rains. Drain any stagnant pools of water which includes potted plant bases, bird baths, roof gutters, buckets, tarps, tin cans, plastic containers, and any water landscaping features with areas of quiet water.

Essentially any item holding quiet water can be a development site for mosquitoes to lay eggs. A 6-inch diameter container with only ½-inch of water can be enough water for mosquito development.

You might also need to carve a channel to help pooling water drain or fill in depressions like vehicle tracks with soil to eliminate sites of standing water.

Replace water in sources like dog bowls and bird baths daily to prevent mosquitoes from breeding. Children's toys, wading pools, and anything that holds water should be flipped over when not in use. Standing water needs to be eliminated for your protection against mosquitoes.

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