

NEWS COLUMN

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Mosquito Life Cycle Reduction and Control

It's spring and the buzzing in your ear is soon to follow if you have not already heard those pesky mosquitoes. Along with this comes the threat of West Nile Virus (WNV).

Mosquito populations can increase very quickly. The new egg can become an adult in as little time as 14 days. Mosquito life cycles vary by species. As an example with the Culex species eggs may hatch within 3 days. With the Aedes Species eggs can lie dormant for 1-5 years. Regardless of species of mosquito, all have one common thread; they all need adequate amounts of standing water to reproduce. Standing water must be present for a minimum of 5-6 days for mosquito populations to effectively hatch. Mosquitoes cannot reproduce in running water such as rivers and streams.

How to reduce mosquito populations in order of effectiveness are:

1. Eliminate breeding areas-dumping and draining water sources
2. Larvicide treatments
3. Adulticide treatments

Breeding areas are anything that holds standing water for more than 5 days. Examples are low sloughy areas, tire piles, open containers or septic tanks, burning barrels, roof gutters, wheelbarrows, children's wading pools, fish ponds, etc. These areas/containers are possible habitats so drain or dump all standing water that is possible, to reduce breeding.

Larval control is much less expensive and much more effective than trying to control adult mosquitoes. Larval control includes surface films, synthetics, biological (Bt's) and growth regulators. The most common of these methods is biological or (Bt's). Surface films work on the basis of lowering surface tension and thus reducing the juvenile forms of mosquitoes ability to hang on to the surface thus drowning. Biological or Bt's contain spores. The spores paralyze the gut of the wriggles when ingested. Example of Bt's are mosquito dunks, bits (granules) or vectobac. These products are added to standing water and retard the growth, which leads to death of the larva.

Adult mosquito control methods are the least effective and most expensive. These methods are the shortest lived and have very little residual effect. Adult control may reduce populations in a treated area but remember other adult mosquitoes can fly in from 5 miles away within a 10-15 hour period. There are many adult mosquito insecticides on the market. If you choose this method of control make sure to read and follow all label directions. A majority of insecticides are administered in liquid spray form.

One of the keys to any mosquito control programs is to remember that it is a control program and not an eradication program. No combination of control methods or programs is going to eliminate all mosquito populations or WNV risk.

Remember the two most effective things you can do to protect yourself and family from WNV are reducing mosquito habitat and implementing adequate personal methods. Reduce your time outdoors from sundown to sunrise. Wear long loose fitting clothing and utilize insect repellent that contains DEET. Repellent should be sprayed on clothing and exposed skin. Always read and follow label directions.

Also make sure to fix holes in screens of doors and windows.

If you own horses get them vaccinated ASAP! Check with your local vet for details and timing of vaccinations.