

## Mitigating Menacing Mosquitoes

*By Raymond R. King, Director of Environmental Health, North Georgia Health District*

Experts are predicting a higher than normal incidence of diseases carried by mosquitoes. <sup>1</sup>A case of West Nile has already been confirmed in the Atlanta area.

The type of mosquitoes and their impact on your daily activities will vary, depending on where you live. In heavily urbanized areas residents will more likely be affected by pesky container-breeders while rural residents may be affected by mosquitoes that breed in natural environments such as tree holes, puddles, and other stagnant shallow water. Mosquitoes never breed in running water and are usually kept in check by small fish in ponds and lakes.

But no matter where we live, there are some general guidelines we can all follow to minimize the incidence of mosquitoes and our exposure to the diseases they transmit:

1. Remove all standing water from your yard by emptying and cleaning all containers, even very small ones. For example, do not leave toys that can retain water outside; remove saucers from under flower pots; clean or remove pool covers; clean pools and keep water chlorinated; cover rain barrels with mosquito proof netting; clean rain gutters and rain spouts.

2. Controlling adult mosquitoes is a hundred times more difficult and costly than controlling mosquito larvae. If you have to control adult mosquitoes in your yard, remember that mosquitoes have a long history of developing resistance to insecticides when applied incorrectly. Only a limited number of insecticides prove effective in adult mosquito control, therefore it is important that applications be made correctly according to the labeled instructions specifically for adult mosquito control. In general, trying to control adult mosquitoes yourself is going to be difficult. Some fogger products such as Raid Yard Guard may provide temporary relief and some pest control companies sell automatic misters, carbon dioxide attraction traps and similar products. If you use a carbon dioxide unit, place it

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AWAY from your house, not on the deck or near a door. Ultrasonic mosquito repellent units are at best questionable in effectiveness.

3. If you have standing water in your yard, you may apply insecticides yourself to control mosquitoes in the larval stage. Use products containing *Bacillus thuringiensis israeliensis* (Bti) or methoprene (altosid) and always follow the directions on the label.

4. If the source of mosquitoes (stagnant water) is on another property, contact your county environmental health office for assistance. Some counties have mosquito control programs and regulations but most do not. Your environmental health officer may be able to help resolve issues of mosquito breeding on other nearby properties.

5. Organize or participate in clean-up activities to pick up garbage from parks and other public spaces. Some very common items that breed mosquitoes are old tires, garbage cans, trash dumps, bird baths, tree holes, stopped-up gutters, puddles, right-of-way ditches that hold water, small decorative fish ponds with no water circulation, and just about anything that holds stagnant water for two weeks or more. By helping limit potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes, every resident can contribute to reducing the nuisance caused by mosquitoes and stop the transmission of mosquito-borne diseases.

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<sup>1</sup>Reference: May 4, 2010 press release from Clayton County Board of Health (attached).