

Mosquito Habitat Control

One thing the experts agree on is that our first line of defense against West Nile Virus should be to reduce the conditions that mosquitoes need to reproduce. We call this habitat control. If we don't have mosquitoes, the disease cannot be spread to humans or wildlife. Habitat control is the lowest cost, least toxic, most effective way to lower your risk of contracting the disease. The City urges everyone to reduce the areas near your home where mosquitoes can breed.

Mosquitoes can breed in very small amounts of standing water in as little as five days. After mating, adult female mosquitoes will take a blood meal by biting a human or an animal. She will then lay eggs in or near standing water. Once the eggs hatch, the mosquito larvae will live in the water until they develop into adults. The best way to control mosquito habitat is to eliminate all standing water that the mosquitoes need to breed. Because some species of mosquito only need very small amounts of water, citizens must be diligent in removing or fixing places where water can collect.

Here are some examples of items that can provide mosquito breeding habitat:

- buckets, toys, and other items in yards;
- untreated swimming pools;
- pet food and water bowls;
- bird baths;
- garbage cans and recycle containers;
- outdoor potted plants with saucers;
- plastic corrugated drainage pipe, even if buried underground;
- fish ponds or other artificial water ponds;
- gutters and downspouts that don't drain completely;
- beds of pickup trucks.

There are a number of things you can do to reduce mosquito habitat. All of them involve:

1) reducing the number of places where water can collect; 2) cleaning out water containers that you must have outdoors at least every five or seven days; 3) keeping mosquitoes from getting to the standing water, or 4) finding a way of eliminating mosquito larvae before they mature into adults.

There are many easy ways to reduce mosquito habitat around your home. The easiest way is to place all toys, plant pots, buckets, or other items where water cannot collect in them. You can also use items such as fiberglass window screening, the same material that is used in your windows, to keep mosquitoes away from standing water in items that must stay outside, such as certain plant pots and corrugated drainage pipes. Fiberglass screening can be purchased in rolls at hardware stores and can be cut to size with scissors. It can be secured to plant pots and to corrugated pipes, downspouts, and other items with specially sized clamps or duct tape. In limited circumstances, standing water can be treated with a safe type of pesticide.

Here are some suggestions for reducing mosquitoes:

1. It is best to remove or all toys, buckets, and other items where water can collect or be sure to dump them out after each rain.
2. Drill 1/4 inch drain holes in garbage/recycle containers that may collect water. Our City recycle containers have holes, but they are not in the very bottom of the container so water can still collect unless you drill holes on the very bottom.
3. Leave outdoor potted plants without saucers or secure fiberglass screening around them so mosquitoes cannot get in or out of the saucer. Cut a piece of fiberglass screening large enough to cover the bottom of the saucer and go up the sides of the plant pot so that mosquitoes can't get into the saucer. Duct tape can be used to secure the screening.
4. Thoroughly clean out birdbaths and children's pools at least every five days.
5. Does your fish pond have fish? If not, you can purchase fish, even inexpensive goldfish, to live in the pond and eat the mosquito larvae. Monitor fish ponds to be sure no larvae are living in the water. Larvae are 1/8 to 1/4 inch long and will wiggle in the water.
6. Fix any gutters and downspouts that do not drain properly.

7. Secure fiberglass screening around ribbed/corrugated drain pipes. Dryer clamps (developed for clothes dryer hoses and available in hardware stores) can be used to secure the screening. Duct tape might also work—check after a heavy rain to be sure the force of rainwater does not push the screening off the pipe.
8. Do your gutters or sump pump pipes empty into a corrugated pipe? Secure fiberglass screening to both pipes so the mosquitoes can't get into the corrugated pipe. Automobile hose clamps can be used to secure the screening on smaller pipes. Duct tape may also work—be sure it is tight.
9. If your pickup truck has a bed liner, rainwater can collect in the bed. Even cars and other vehicles can have small spots under the hood or trunk lid where rainwater can collect. Drive your car or truck around the block within five days of each rainfall to drain this water.