

MESSENGER-INQUIRER



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Tips on Managing Mosquitoes Around the Home
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Evening activities are challenging with mosquitoes present. The rainfall this spring makes management difficult. Water standing in the environment provides a location for the mosquitoes to complete their life cycle as the weather becomes warmer throughout summer and fall. Tips on managing mosquitoes around the home are provided. Remember that some mosquitoes stay close to breeding sites and some types travel long distances, even up to several miles.

Disturbing the life cycle of mosquitoes decreases their populations. Adult females lay eggs near or along the edges of water or where water accumulates. The eggs hatch, and the resulting larvae, called “wigglers” because of their movement in water, come to the surface to breathe. From this stage, it may take one week for them to develop into biting adults, depending on the species and temperature. Two common groups of mosquitoes in Kentucky are *Culex* sp. and *Aedes* sp.

Eliminating standing water interrupts the life cycle of the mosquito. Remember, water-holding sites are not always obvious. Look at pet water dishes and think about flowerpot

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drainage saucers. Empty these every two days as the temperature rises. The water in birdbaths and summer wading pools should be changed at least weekly. Plan on cleaning and chlorinating swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs.

Remove empty tin cans, plastic containers, buckets, soda cans, plastic sheeting, and the like. Continue to watch for these items throughout the summer. Turn over wheelbarrows when not in use.

Standing water in roof gutters can produce millions of mosquitoes each season, so clean clogged gutters carefully. Periodically inspect gutters to make sure they drain properly.

Check all outdoor faucets, air conditioner units and condensation drains, cisterns, cesspools, and septic tanks for water puddles that remain for several days. Eliminate any puddles that form. In addition, watch for and repair any leaks.

Consider stocking ornamental pools with mosquito fish, including predacious minnows. In the ornamental pool, keep the banks steep instead of having a gradual drop off to enable fish to reach the wrigglers.

To prevent water accumulation in landscapes, gardens, and lawns, irrigate sufficiently for good growth but not to the point that water stands for several days.

Tires are primary mosquito breeding areas. Remove and dispose of them. More information about proper disposal for consumers can be found at the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet: <https://eec.ky.gov/Environmental-Protection/Waste/recycling-and-local-assistance/waste-tires/Pages/default.aspx>. Also, contact Daviess County Landfill.

Tremendous numbers of mosquitoes can breed in shallow, marshy, or swampy locations, ditches, and other low areas. Draining or filling in these areas around the home is an effective

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long-term solution. If it is impossible to eliminate standing water, consider using a mosquito-specific larvicide. The larvicide is an insecticide used to control immature mosquitoes.

Larvicides contain the active ingredient methoprene (an insect growth regulator) or the bacterial toxin produced by *Bacillus thuringiensis israeliensis* (Bti). These products are essentially harmless to fish, wildlife, and other non-target organisms if used according to the label. The easy-to-apply products come in water-soluble granules, pellets, or briquettes and are usually available from farm supply stores, garden centers, pesticide dealers, and online. Always read the product label and use it according to the directions provided. Remember, the label is the law.

Gimmicks advertised in print and electronic media are generally ineffective. These include ultrasonic devices, mosquito-repelling plants, or garlic. Traps that capture large numbers of mosquitoes have not been proven effective at eliminating pest bites, even though they might capture impressive numbers of mosquitoes.

Citronella oil does have mosquito-repelling properties, and scented candles can provide some protection if multiple candles are placed within a few feet of where people are sitting. A single candle at the center or edge of a picnic table probably won't provide much benefit other than ambiance.

To protect yourself and reduce the chance of being bitten, stay indoors at dusk. Asian tiger mosquitoes (*Aedes albopictus*) are active during early morning and late afternoon and stay within about 250 yards of their breeding site. Also, wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants outside prevents mosquitoes from biting you. If the fabric is lightweight, mosquito bites may still occur.

West Nile Virus is a disease carried by mosquitoes that can be found in this area during summer and fall. Mosquitoes become West Nile Virus carriers when they bite infected birds.

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The virus eventually moves to the mosquitoes' salivary glands. It can be injected into bitten humans and animals, where the virus can multiply and possibly cause illness. More information about West Nile Virus is available at the Center for Disease Control Prevention at the CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/westnile/>.

For more information on controlling mosquitoes, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu. The fact sheet "Mosquitoes: Practical Advice for Homeowners" is available on the web at <https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/ef005>.

Annette's Tips:

A search tool to determine the right insect repellent for mosquitoes for you is found at <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you>. You can specify the target pest, protection time desired, active ingredient, or other product-specific information. Check the label to see if the product can be applied to outer clothing and skin. For children, it is best to contact your pediatrician for suggestions.

Continuing Event:

The Owensboro Regional Farmers' Market, located at 1205 Triplett St., is open from 8:00 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays and Saturdays. It is also open on Thursdays from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. through July. Locally grown produce, such as tomatoes and cucumbers, and meat are available along with baked goods and crafts from local artisans.

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