

## Mosquito Control District: Cool nights don't stop biting pests

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The holiday season is here, with family and friends gathering for good times, fine food, and the occasional libation. Homes are decorated with lights, pine boughs, holly, mistletoe, and poinsettias. Local stores and roads are filled to overflowing with shoppers and tourists preparing to enjoy the holidays in Naples.

At the Collier Mosquito Control District (CMCD), the holiday season normally indicates an easing of the harried, continuous seven-day work weeks of summer. Now, CMCD personnel can take an occasional day off on the weekend as mosquito numbers begin to drop from summer's peak.

The cooler, drier weather of winter reduces the production of new mosquitoes and increases the natural mortality of existing adults. Fewer mosquitoes is a good thing for all the snowbirds who want to sunbathe on New Year's Day.

About now, residents of Marco and the other coastal areas of the District are probably thinking, "Fewer mosquitoes! This guy has sniffed too much bug juice, or something, because we are getting carried away by mosquitoes here."

Believe it or not, while there are mosquitoes biting people now, there are definitely far fewer than there were five months ago, and the CMCD has the records to prove it.

With the lack of rain, production of freshwater mosquitoes in the district has almost stopped. However, freshwater mosquitoes will continue to be produced in containers like bird baths, flower pots, kiddie pools and culverts that are kept wet by lawn sprinklers or some other artificial means. There are some of summer's freshwater adults out there too, but as temperatures get colder they will be less active and die off naturally.

Salt marsh mosquitoes are the major nuisance currently being faced by coastal residents. These mosquitoes hatched out as the result of a recent high tide that flooded local marshes. While it may be colder out, it is still warm enough for the mosquitoes to go through their life stages in the water and emerge as adults.

In the middle of summer, the population of mosquitoes currently bothering people would not be a problem for the CMCD. The airplanes would take off at 2 a.m. or the helicopters would buzz off into the dawn, make their applications and return to base, secure in the knowledge that the mosquito population had been significantly reduced.

In the winter, however, it's a different story. The falling temperatures that help to reduce

mosquito numbers also severely reduce the effectiveness of CMCD applications, making control much less of a sure thing than during the summer.

In order for CMCD applications to be effective, the targeted mosquitoes must be active and flying around so that they come into contact with the extremely fine aerosol droplets produced by the CMCD aircraft. Unfortunately, as air temperatures approach 60 degrees F mosquito activity rapidly diminishes.

During the winter, residents and the CMCD are faced with daytime temperatures in the 70's and 80's. This is warm enough for the mosquitoes to be active and out searching for blood. But the temperatures at night and in the early morning -- the only times that CMCD can legally make control applications — are all too frequently in the low 60s or high 50s. Unfortunately, this is too low for the effective control operations that Naples residents have come to expect from the CMCD.

It seems that it is the holiday season in Naples for mosquitoes too -- lots of fresh bodies to sample during the warm sunny days and protection from CMCD applications during the cool nights. Santa should be so good to all of us.