

## **Mosquito Control: Ingenious fans found the mosquito mystery solution and even a new cure**

**By JEFFREY STIVERS, special to the Daily News  
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Okay, mystery fans, did you solve the problem of the mysteriously appearing mosquitoes that were invading a Marco island home even while the owners were gone and the water to the home was shut off?

We challenged you to read the article in the Naples Daily News on March 27, then answer the following three questions:

**Where were the mosquitoes breeding?**

**How were they getting into the house?**

**How could you prevent them from entering that way in the future?**

There were quite a few people who demonstrated their detective skills with answers that were very good. Selection of the winners was difficult because there were so many good answers.

However, after much thought, discussion, statistical analysis and coin flipping, we selected three winners who will be receiving fabulous prizes — like baseball caps and other mosquito paraphernalia — for demonstrating their sleuthing skills.

Our winners are: Barbara McCarthy, Michael Gaynor and John Bekish.

**Answers to the question: How did they get in, and where were they breeding?**

Mosquitoes were flying down the vent stack, into the septic tank where they were breeding. The water in the toilet bowl and drains would evaporate over time, allowing some mosquitoes to find their way into the house.

**Answer to the question: How to prevent it in the future:** So far we have only defined the problem. Now we have to prevent the problem in the future. This is one of the most interesting parts of mosquito control because there is no single control method that is the only solution to this problem, or any other mosquito

control problem. There are always several solutions to the problem and none of them are really wrong. For our mystery there are several possible solutions.

Most of them were identified by the people who submitted answers and were suggested to the home owners by the CMCD inspector. Several people also suggested a perfectly good method that was not considered by any of the CMCD personnel. Here are several solutions, any of which would work.

Put screening over the plumbing vent stacks. This will prevent any more female mosquitoes (and other critters) from entering the septic tank. This solution is not immediate since any mosquitoes currently in the septic tank could still enter the house. However, it is the cheapest, simplest, and longest lasting solution. All that is needed is a ladder, a piece of fiberglass screen and a plastic tie wrap or wire tie and about 15 minutes of time.

Materials, excluding the ladder would probably cost less than \$2. This won't work, though, if the home is on a common sewer line with other homes. If that is the case, mosquitoes could enter the sewer pipes almost anywhere and find their way into the home.

Leave the water on and have the management company flush the toilets and run water in the sinks every week. This too would work, but it wastes a tremendous amount of water unnecessarily. The home owners would have to pay for the wasted water and the extra service from the management company. This is not an option for home owners who don't have a management company checking their house, either.

The drains on all of the sinks and toilets could be plugged. Simply put plugs in all of the sink, tub and shower drains. That is simple but don't forget the overflow drains. Those need to be plugged, too, with something like a rag or paper towel.

The problem is, how do you plug the toilet? Well, several of you must have gone to boarding school, as I did, or be into practical jokes, because you had the same solution that I did. Just lift the toilet seat and cover the bowl with plastic wrap.

This, too, is a good solution but it has some obvious drawbacks. It will be time-consuming to plug all the drains, especially the overflows, before closing up the house and then to open all the drains up again. And don't forget that plastic wrap on the toilet — that needs to come off immediately!

Some people suggested spraying the drains with insecticide. While this might work for a short time, it is neither a good idea nor legal. Anything sprayed into the drains goes into the sewer or the septic tank and then into the environment. Why do that if there are other solutions?

Using septic tank-safe antifreeze in all of the drains and the toilet was suggested by a few people. This is a new one for us and just goes to show that you can

always learn something new. This is not the same type of antifreeze that is used in cars, however. It can probably be found at RV stores and possibly RV campsite shops, especially up north.

Simply pour a quantity into each drain and toilet before closing up the house. The antifreeze, I'm told, will not evaporate so it will stay in the drains and toilet bowls, keeping them sealed. When the house is opened again, a couple of flushes will clean the toilets and a minute of running water in all sinks clears those drains. An elegant solution for folks on a common sewer line.

There you have it, folks, mystery solved and the homeowners satisfied with the suggestions for control. At least we have to assume so, since they have not called back to complain of a continuing problem.

We hope you had some fun trying to solve the mystery. Your answers were good, entertaining, and educational for us.



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