

## **Mosquito Control: There's no bite-safe season as far as hungry Collier mosquitoes are concerned**

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By **JEFFREY STIVERS**, Special to the Daily News

Winter in Naples brings with it seasonal residents, brown lawns, and the end of another mosquito season. It also brought the removal of the West Nile virus Medical Alert for Collier County, as well as the rest of Florida, and the end of seven-day workweeks for Collier Mosquito Control District (CMCD) operations personnel.

Even though the Medical Alert has been canceled, there have been several nights with mosquito killing frost, and large numbers of mosquitoes are not readily apparent, residents must continue to be aware of the threat of West Nile virus. While the threat is greatly reduced during the dryer winter months, it is not completely eliminated and residents should take personal protection measures when needed.

Winter's cold, dry weather has reduced the production of new mosquitoes. It has also served to reduce the number of adult mosquitoes available to plague residents. However, the cold weather will not have eliminated all of the mosquitoes capable of transmitting West Nile virus, or those that bite and otherwise annoy residents.

Mosquitoes lucky enough (for them, not us) to have found a warm, moist area to hide can survive long periods of cold temperature. Some likely areas for survivors are in the crawl spaces under homes, in garages and attics, in storm drains, under rocks, in hollow trees and knot holes, around the roots of trees and shrubs, in animal burrows, and at many other sites where conditions are favorable for survival. If temperatures climb above 60 or 65 degrees, these survivors can emerge from hiding to bite the unsuspecting.

Because of this possibility, residents should continue to take precautions any time they might encounter mosquitoes. Residents working in the shrubbery and flower beds in their yards would do well to wear long sleeve shirts and long pants and/or apply an insect repellent containing DEET. Likewise, people partaking of the many opportunities to experience the natural environment of Florida should protect themselves. If it is warm enough for shorts and short sleeves, it is also probably warm enough for surviving mosquitoes to find and feed on those exposed arms and legs.

While the few remaining mosquitoes are hiding out, CMCD personnel are recovering from the mosquito season just passed and preparing for the next. Operations personnel, especially, are enjoying the opportunity to sleep in a bit on the weekends and have time with their families after six or seven months of seven day weeks.

While the frenzied activity of the height of mosquito season has passed, CMCD personnel continue to be busy. Scheduled maintenance of aircraft, upgrading of application equipment, and test flying of aircraft keeps aircraft mechanics and pilots busy. Operations personnel are busy cleaning and performing maintenance on their equipment, including rebuilding and painting all of the New Jersey light traps used to monitor mosquito populations. Professional staff is busy fulfilling requests from around the country to give presentations on CMCD control methods to other mosquito control professionals. All CMCD personnel also attend a variety of training sessions to maintain proficiency and keep up with the latest improvements in their particular field of expertise.

The 2002 mosquito season is over but CMCD personnel are hard at work preparing for the 2003 season. With the recent rains, high tides and winds from the southwest, that season may start in as little as two weeks, with an influx of salt marsh mosquitoes from the Everglades. Local residents should be prepared to take precautions against mosquitoes when exposure is possible because the mosquitoes will be back all too soon.



*Jeffrey C. Stivers, Ph.D. is director of research for Collier Mosquito Control District; contact him at [JStivers@collier-mosquito.org](mailto:JStivers@collier-mosquito.org) or by phone at 436-1000.*