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## Keeping Mosquitoes from Bugging Moraga

Cathy Dausman



Josefa Cabnda disperses a mosquito treatment  
Photo A. Scheck

Contra Costa Mosquito & Vector Control District (CCMVCD) is busy waging war. The agency recently treated Moraga hills and open spaces against mosquito infestations, inspected creeks and treated tree holes to eliminate standing water.

Standing water is a mosquito's best friend. Mosquitoes and people are not best friends. Mosquitoes can transmit West Nile virus, dengue fever, dog heartworm disease and malaria. They lay their eggs in standing water during breeding season in May or June.

Contra Costa County has 23 different kinds of mosquitoes, says CCMVCD's Deborah Bass. In peak season they mature from egg to biting adult in just five days and can travel up to 20 miles from where they hatch. They need very little water—just a couple tablespoons— to reproduce. She says mosquitoes reproducing in clogged rain gutters number in the tens of thousands, but that "neglected swimming pools remain our number one concern.

One neglected pool can produce more than one million mosquitoes and affect people up to five miles away."

CCMVCD's work is largely preventative. They eliminate standing water, distribute mosquitofish and kill mosquito larva. The agency uses bacterial insecticides, specifically *Bacillus Thuringiensis Israelensis* (BTI) or *Bacillus Sphaericus* (BS) to kill mosquito larva. BTI and BS occur naturally, and are effective against mosquitoes, but do not harm mammals, birds and most other insects because they don't share mosquito cell type, says Bass. Treating mosquitoes as pupa requires Methoprene or a larvacide oil. Occasionally Duplex, a mixture of the other pesticides, is used to ensure both larva and pupa are controlled. CCMVCD uses only products registered with the Environmental

Protection Agency for mosquito control.

Dan Bernie, Moraga's Public Works and Parks Superintendent, meets with CCMVCD in two weeks. "We work pretty closely with Vector Control," he says, "and we try to be a chemical-free town. I've seen them [CCMVCD] walk by the Hacienda and tip over bird baths [to clear standing water]." Bernie says a local scout troop, in cooperation with the city, has installed bat boxes in key locations to try to keep mosquitoes in check. He also says he just returned from the Delta and saw standing water in places he'd never seen it before. More standing water means more mosquito breeding grounds.

"We all live and work in places where mosquitoes can breed," says Bass. "Everyone needs to halt their population growth." In addition to cleaning gutters and keeping pools mosquito-free, she suggests residents:

- Empty standing water from outside toys, wheel barrows, flower pots and tree wells.
- Stock horse troughs with mosquitofish. Each mosquitofish devours 500 mosquitoes daily.
- Keep windows and screens repaired.
- Report dead birds to the West Nile Virus hotline at 877-968-2473.

Inspect your property twice weekly to prevent outbreaks. If you have a problem, kill and save a mosquito for CCMVCD to evaluate.

Residents can also sign up to be notified of mosquito spraying online at

<http://contracostamosquito.com> or follow the agency on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/ccmosquito](http://www.twitter.com/ccmosquito).

Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District is an 85 year-old public health agency. "We are a special District - we are not part of the county government," Bass says. "Our services include [abatement of] mosquitoes, rats and mice, skunks, yellow jackets and ticks...all free."

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[back](#)

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