

PROBLEMS WITH MOSQUITOS AND TICKS?

Mosquitos and ticks pose a serious health hazard to you, your family, and your pets. Many companies advertise an easy solution – spraying the area around your home with chemicals to kill and deter biting insects.

This pamphlet discusses these chemical sprays, their effectiveness and safety, and suggests alternatives to protect the health of you and your family.

The chemical sprays that are used to control mosquitos and ticks are advertised as “safe for kids and pets” but remember, these sprays are poison. That is how they work.

One of the chemicals commonly used for spraying is called **Cross Check** or **Bifenthren**. On its Safety Data Sheet (required for all hazardous materials) it’s more accurate chemical name is: **(2-methyl[1,1-biphenyl]-3-yl)methyl 3-(2-chloro-3,3,3-trifluoro-1-propenyl)-2,2-dimethylcyclopropanecarboxylate**. This chemical works by disrupting the insect’s nervous system.

Some companies advertise that their chemicals are “derived from Chrysanthemums” but this is

misleading. The industrially produced sprays only have a small part of its chemical structure that resembles one of the natural pyrethrins in those flowers.

If you do decide to spray these chemicals in your yard, insist that the company give you the Safety Data Sheet – it has the contact information for poison control and first aid information. The Safety Data Sheet will have more accurate guidelines for when it is safe to allow yourself and your children on your chemically treated lawn.

Contrary to the advertisements of the mosquito spray companies, there is no single, easy solution to eradicate ticks and mosquitos.

So, what do you do instead?

There are three strategies that combined, are better than spraying: personal protection, maintenance measures, and source control.

Personal protection using repellent that you spray onto your clothing, not your body, is the most effective. Spraying the sleeves of your shirt and pants legs deters mosquitos and ticks.

You may use Deet products but remember to only spray your clothes. On your skin you can use organic sprays

that use citrus and other oils. Read the label and follow the directions.

Ticks pose serious life-altering health issues. The best strategy is to apply repellent, Picaridin is recommended, and wear light colored clothing while outdoors to better see ticks that hop aboard. Light colored clothing also seems to deter mosquitos.

The more important measure is to conduct thorough checks of the clothing, body, and hair of all family members, even pets, DAILY. You should make this a routine year-round. Get the ticks early, before they bite you.

EVEN IF YOU SPRAY and assuming the spray kills all ticks in your yard, where else do you or your kids or pets go? They can still pick up ticks and bring them home. One of the problems with the spray companies is the false sense of security – you forget to check for ticks. Make it a routine at all times of the year.

Check areas where clothing is tight, the backs of your arms and armpits, and your hair line. Get a hand mirror to check more difficult places. Talk to your Doctor immediately if you are bitten. Even if the bite is recent or no rash

forms because some tick-borne diseases do not produce a rash.



Maintenance measures take away habitat for ticks and mosquitos in your yard. Mosquitos can breed in a bottle cap. Don't let any standing water exist for more than a day. Make sure your gutters drain effectively – clean and check them in the spring. Bird baths, dog bowls, and any commonly standing water should be emptied daily. If you do have standing water that can't be emptied, you can use BT tablets which are available at garden stores. BT is a bacterium that kills mosquito larvae.

For Ticks keep the grass short in the areas you use often. Keep the area around bird feeders clean to minimize mice that carry ticks. Yes, some mosquitos do come out of swamps, but

dragonfly larvae live there too, and dragonflies are the most effective mosquito predators.

Source Control means maintaining a balanced environment around your home. Trees, shrubs, and areas where leaves remain on the ground are the places where the predators that control mosquitos and ticks live. These predators require vegetation and natural places to survive. These natural, undisturbed areas are where mosquito and tick predators, like the tree frog, dragonfly, bats, skunks, and opossum live.

The chemical sprays are highly toxic to honeybees, fish, and other aquatic animals such as the frogs and salamanders that prey on mosquitos and ticks. You aren't just killing mosquitos and ticks when you spray, you are severing important links in the food chain of all the animals that help your neighborhood maintain a healthy balance of predator to prey.

By spraying everything, not only will you rob yourself of things in nature, you also eliminate the natural predators. Let nature help control your pests.



A tree frog, about the size of a quarter, on the hunt in a Wrentham yard.

More information about the natural environment in Wrentham are available on the Conservation Commission's Facebook page and the Conservation Commission's website that may be found on the Town website.

Suggestions and Questions may be directed to: Wrentham Conservation Commission 508-384-5417 or its Agent, Darryl Luce dluce@Wrentham.ma.us