

Check Your Property for Mosquito Breeding Sites

Are mosquito breeding sites lurking around your farm or home? Shallow, stagnant water could be the culprit and now is the time to eliminate these sources around your home and farm says Laura Jane Murphy, Ohio State University Extension, Lawrence County. West Nile Virus, a mosquito-borne virus, is anticipated in all parts of Ohio this summer.

“Standing water is a draw for mosquitoes because their eggs need water to hatch,” says Murphy. “People in our county need to look around their homes and farms for places where mosquitoes could breed and eliminate the stagnant, standing water in these places.”

Mosquito breeding sites are anything that could hold water, such as wheelbarrows, buckets, tarps and parked farm equipment. These things need to be drained, turned over or put inside to prevent them from filling with rain water. Other potential sources of standing water are tin cans, bottled, plastic wrappers and other items that easily fill with water if left outside. Old tires attract mosquitoes because of the water that collects inside. Tires should be properly disposed of and not left laying outside.

Mosquitoes breed in shallow water that stands for more than three days. Low areas in driveways, barnyards and pastures should be drained or filled with dirt or gravel. Watering tanks should be emptied once a week and kept free of algae.

Horse owners should take extra precautions to protect their horses. Horses should be kept indoors during peak periods of mosquito activity which is early evening (dusk) and early morning (dawn.) Lights should be kept off in the stable as this attracts mosquitoes to the area. All birds, including chickens, should be kept away from the stable as these can serve as a host for the virus.

Mosquito control products, such as fog products, are available for the stable or barn area. When choosing a pesticide read the label and only use products labeled for the animal or for the area where the spray will be used. Always follow the label directions for amounts, mixture and application directions. Topical preparations containing mosquito repellents are available, but be sure to read the label for application directions.

Protection from mosquitoes should also be provided for humans. If possible, avoid being outside during the peak mosquito periods of mosquito activity. When outside, plan to wear light colored clothes with long sleeves, long pants, shoes and socks. Use insect repellent with no more than 20-30 percent DEET for adults and less than 10 percent DEET for children.

Mosquito breeding areas can also be found around the house. Roof gutters need to be cleaned and tight covers should be kept over cisterns, septic tanks and rain barrels. The water in bird baths and wading pools should be drained once a week. If there is a farm pond, keep the banks mowed and free of vegetation. The pond should be managed to reduce floating algae and emergent weeds. Fish species such as bluegill, small largemouth bass and top-feeding minnows will readily eat mosquito larvae in the pond.

Last year, West Nile Virus was confirmed in dead birds in all 88 counties in Ohio. The virus is spread to birds, horses and people through the bite of an infected mosquito.