

Press Release

The District of Sparwood 2010 Mosquito Nuisance and West Nile Virus Risk Reduction Initiative

Over the next couple of weeks District residents might notice mosquito control program biologists as they begin sampling water bodies and controlling larval mosquito populations using the biological mosquito control agents VectoBac 200G and VectoLex WSP.

Both products use ground corn cob granules that contain bacterial spores of biological control agents. After application to infested water bodies, the spores are eaten by mosquito larvae and it prevents them from emerging to cause annoyance, or worse, potentially transmit WNV disease.

Besides ongoing efforts directed at the control of nuisance mosquitos, there will continued treatment of local sites known to contain mosquitos species that can transmit West Nile virus. Although West Nile virus has not been found locally in Sparwood, in 2009 human cases were confirmed in the southern Okanagan, the Fraser Valley Lower Mainland, and all neighboring States and Provinces.

Since 2005 the Province, through the Ministry of Health, funded West Nile virus control operations. In the early spring this year, the Province announced there would be no funding for West Nile virus mosquito control locally in Sparwood in 2010. While the Nuisance Mosquito Control Program is well established in Sparwood, the continuance of storm water catch basin treatments is a West Nile virus Risk Reduction Initiative that will also funded entirely by the District of Sparwood this year.

The District has decided to continue with storm water catch basin treatments in order to help protect public health by reducing the risk of exposure of residents to West Nile virus vector mosquitos.

The Program is coordinated by ***D.G. Regan and Associates Ltd.***, an environmental services firm staffed by professional biologists that specialize in mosquito population management. The program involves public education, mosquito species surveillance, mapping, and environmentally sustainable means to control nuisance mosquitos. Habitat monitoring and larvicide treatments by field biologists will continue through late August, as conditions warrant.

It is important that residents understand that mosquitos are a natural part of the environment. For this reason, and despite the fact that the biological control agent used is extremely effective, **no** amount of mosquito larvicide application will totally eradicate the mosquito annoyance problem experienced. In certain areas of the District, some level of mosquito annoyance should be reasonably anticipated.

Property owners are urged to assist by eliminating standing water, especially any artificial containers such as buckets, discarded tires, water filled boats or other containers and cleaning of rain gutters. Elimination of water ensures the permanent elimination of mosquitos.

The following information about mosquitos will be of interest to District residents:

Homeowner Efforts

Residents can help reduce mosquito annoyance around the home by eliminating standing water sites and by:

- removing discarded containers from around your property;
- regularly replacing water in bird baths and livestock troughs; and
- storing boats, canoes and other objects so that they do not collect rainwater.

To reduce the annoyance of mosquitos:

- install and maintain tight fitting window and door screens to help keep mosquitos out of the home;
- wear light colored, loose fitting clothing; and
- since heat and moisture from barbeques attracts mosquitos, after cooking move away to enjoy your meal.

Misconceptions about Mosquito Repellents

Sound and electric devices:

- these devices have no repellence effects; and
- units are marketed with no test results.

Citronella (plants and candles):

- there is no data to support mosquito control claims; and
- unpleasant odors do not guarantee results.

Skin moisturizing oil:

- field tests do not support mosquito control claims;
- mosquitos are repelled far more by DEET than by skin moisturizer products.

Misconceptions about Mosquito Control

Bug zappers:

- mosquitos comprise less than 5% of their catch;
- kill mostly beneficial insects; and
- the zappers actually attract mosquitos.

Insect eating birds:

- ornithologists state that swallows do not prefer mosquitos; and
- mosquitos make up less than 3% of their diet.

Insect eating bats:

- bat diets consist mainly of beetles, wasps, ants, flies, stoneflies, mayflies, moths and grasshoppers; and mosquitos make up less than 1% of their diet.
- Mosquito Magnets can actually draw mosquitos into an area to bite humans

None of these have been shown to provide any scientifically valid level of relief from mosquito annoyance.

Residents should note that while the activities of control staff are not always observed, they are out in the field sampling and applying larvicide to control mosquitos.

If you have known mosquito habitat on your property, and you know that the program biologists have already reviewed in the past, there is no need to call to report as they will have already been added to the site database and will be handled by staff over the course of the season.

If you have mosquito habitat that is on your property which is not already known by control personnel, please contact program staff through the District of Sparwood office, or the contractor, ***D G Regan and Associates Ltd.*** directly and toll free 1-800-681-3472, or via email at dgra@telus.net . Please leave a message containing your name, address, daytime contact or cellular numbers, and whether you are reporting annoyance or previously unknown mosquito habitat. Program control staff will follow up as field activities allow, usually within 48 hours.