



Charleston County News Release

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County Acknowledges National Mosquito Awareness Week, June 24-30

Mosquito Control receives record number of calls, employees educate the public on ways to eliminate mosquitoes



Did you know: A mosquito beats its wings 300-600 times per second making the mosquito buzz sound. [Charleston County Government's](#) Mosquito Control Division employees are teaching the public about these and many others facts, including how people can help get rid of the pests on their own.

The week of June 24-30 2 has been declared the Annual National Mosquito Control Awareness Week by the [American Mosquito Control Association](#).

This year, County staff has received a record number of calls from the public requesting service to get rid of mosquitoes.

"To date, we have received 1,625 calls in 2012, compared with 323 calls to date in 2011. Employees are working seven days a week ground spraying, and several aircraft are spraying throughout the County," said Donna Odom, Charleston County Mosquito Control Superintendent. "We will use Mosquito Awareness Week as a time to educate citizens about the important service provided by mosquito control workers, and what the public can do in their own yards to help."

In an effort to reach out and educate the public, Charleston County inspectors routinely hand out informational packets at each service request. As part of awareness week, staff will also go door-to-door in the Melrose area of West Ashley for a special citizen's awareness campaign, where they will talk to neighbors.

"Mosquito Awareness Week provides an excellent opportunity to talk with people in person and answer their questions and concerns," said Ed Harne, a taxonomist with Charleston County Mosquito Control. "We will give people information on the mosquito life cycle and tips on how to eliminate mosquito egg-laying sites around their homes in order to help reduce the number of mosquitoes in their neighborhoods."

Brochures will also be distributed to local libraries and Charleston County parks.

Each year, Charleston County Mosquito Control treats over 50,000 acres by aircraft and 500,000 acres through ground spraying.

"The first thing we need to know is where mosquitoes breed and how they live their life cycles," Odom said. "Mosquitoes carry diseases including [West Nile virus](#), [dengue fever](#), [malaria](#), [Eastern equine encephalitis virus](#) and heartworms. The public has to be an integral part of our fight against mosquito-borne diseases." The young mosquitoes, or larvae, cannot live and become adult mosquitoes without water. So the key is to get rid of the containers that hold water around homes, yards, schools and businesses. The public must help by flushing water out of birdbaths and pet dishes with a garden hose. Keep anything that has potential to hold water, such as toys, buckets, cans and bottles, turned over and emptied.

“In fact, container-breeding mosquitoes generate up to 30% of the requests for service our Division receives each year,” Odom said. “Of these mosquitoes, the Tiger mosquito is a significant pest and can carry the West Nile Virus.”

The Tiger mosquito is a domestic mosquito and is closely associated with humans. Artificial containers, so abundantly provided by modern industrial society, are the major breeding sites and are essential to the production and maintenance of large populations of the Tiger mosquito.

“It is very difficult for Mosquito Control staff to reduce the number of Tiger mosquitoes because they are only daytime biters and have a short flight distance of up to 1,000 feet from where they breed. Therefore, the most effective way to control this mosquito is elimination of the breeding source by the property owners,” Odom said.

Mosquitoes also grow and live in standing water in other types of areas, including ditches and low spots in yards, fields and woods. Because this standing water can't always be eliminated, Charleston County Mosquito Control routinely checks these types of areas for mosquito breeding.

“If there are mosquito larvae present, Mosquito Control employees will put a material into the water that kills only the larvae and does no harm to any other organism,” Odom said.

In addition, small fish that eat mosquito larvae can be put into the water. They are called mosquito fish, and are native to South Carolina.

“All of these treatments will reduce the number of young aquatic stage mosquitoes, but there will still be some adult mosquitoes flying around,” Odom said. “For the adult mosquitoes, Charleston County Mosquito Control uses spray machines on trucks to spray at night. Charleston County Mosquito Control also uses aerial treatment as needed.”

Working together, Charleston County Mosquito Control and the citizens of Charleston County can reduce the mosquito population so that residents can continue to enjoy outside activities and minimize the occurrence of mosquito-carried disease.

SIDEBAR

MOSQUITO FACTS:

- A mosquito's life revolves around water; a female mosquito lays her eggs in water or in areas expected to flood.
- Once they hatch, a larvae mosquito must remain in water until it emerges as an adult approximately one to two weeks later.
- Mosquitoes can become infected with the West Nile Virus when they feed on infected birds.
- Mosquitoes can transmit heartworm disease from an infected dog or cat to a healthy dog or cat.
- Mosquitoes beat their wings 300-600 times per second, making the mosquito buzz sound.

WAYS THE PUBLIC CAN HELP REDUCE MOSQUITOES:

- Every three days, flush birdbaths, potted plant saucers and other containers that hold water
- Keep yard clean and cut
- Remove items from yard that hold water and are not needed outside
- Keep lawn and gardening equipment indoors
- Fix leaky faucets
- Keep gutters clean
- Fill in tree holes with sand or concrete
- Change pet water dishes regularly
- Chlorinate pools and clean the pool and filters
- Add fish to ponds

TO REQUEST SERVICE OR INFORMATION

- To request service or to get information on Charleston County Mosquito Control activities, call (843) 202-7880.
- For information on educational programs and presentations available from Charleston County Mosquito Control, call (843) 202-7886.
- Visit the American Mosquito Control Association's Web site at www.mosquito.org for information on various mosquito-related subjects such as home mosquito control methods, repellents and mosquito biology.

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