

HOT NEWS

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Mosquitoes and Profanity!

Timothy J. Gibb, Extension Entomology, Purdue University
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I estimate that mosquitoes cause one-fifth of all the profanity in the world! I made this scientific calculation while sitting in my backyard last week with some friends. It was a beautiful evening, just about dusk, temperatures were perfect, no wind, - ideal for a bar-b-que. All at once the high-pitched drone of swarms of hungry mosquitoes could be heard approaching our picnic. Then pandemonium struck and I was able to conduct my profanity experiment.

Not only are the bites of mosquitoes painful when one is trying to work in the garden or relax in the yard but mosquitoes are also implicated in the transmission of many serious diseases. We have more than 50 species of mosquitoes in Indiana most of which bite and some of which can transmit serious illnesses.

Weather conditions this year have set the stage for a bumper crop of pesky and dangerous mosquitoes. Our seemingly relentless rains have flooded farmlands, filled ditches and low areas with stagnant water, perfect habitat for mosquitoes.

A female mosquito (note: only the females bite - a subject for a philosophical exposition on another day) that has taken a blood meal uses those nutrients to nourish up to two hundred eggs which will be laid in stagnant water. Depending on the temperature of the water, eggs may hatch in as few as 3 days. The resulting wrigglers can themselves complete immature development in as few as 10 days to become adult mosquitoes.

The well-behaved male mosquitoes fly off to feed on the nectar of tiny flowers but female mosquitoes are immediately bloodthirsty. Each becomes a relentless search agent, zeroing in on hosts using temperature as well as carbon dioxide gradients as guides. Once mosquitoes locate a potential host they persist until they are either successful in biting or become the target of a well-placed swat. Either way, the result is often accompanied by some of the most colorful words in the English language.

How can we help control these pests?



Understanding the basic requirements of mosquitoes allows us to help manage their populations. The connection between water and mosquitoes is the key. Professionals can monitor wetlands and drain or treat areas that are in need. However, a surprising number of mosquitoes develop right under our own noses.

Thousands of mosquitoes can develop in a small, forgotten, container of water, discarded tire or clogged rain gutter, right in our own back yards.

Anything that can hold water such as a birdbath, a wading pool, an old bucket, or a clogged storm drain, is a potential breeding spot. These need to be emptied on a regular basis, discarded or adjusted such that they do not collect and hold water. Discarded tires are a prime source of mosquito habitat because they cannot easily be drained. Clogged rain gutters are difficult to monitor but should be inspected at least yearly.

Remember that mosquitoes can develop from egg to adult in as few as ten days and these mosquitoes don't have to fly far to find us.

Understanding the water/mosquito connection and taking steps to decrease these potential mosquito breeding sites will go a long way in saving out-door recreation events and will help preserve our English language in its more pure form.