



Attention - Residents Who Have Ponds on Their Properties

Operation Mosquito S.T.I.N.G. is a strategy County Executive Andy Spano put in place to address the West Nile encephalitis outbreak. It is designed to track and control mosquitoes at an early stage to prevent illness due to West Nile virus in residents of Westchester County..

West Nile encephalitis is an illness transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito, which becomes infected with the West Nile virus by feeding on an infected bird. West Nile encephalitis is a viral infection of the brain, and can be a serious or even fatal illness. Symptoms of West Nile encephalitis include high fever, headache, confusion, muscle aches and weakness, seizures, or paralysis. At its most serious, the infection can result in coma, permanent neurological damage and death. Symptoms usually occur five to 15 days following the bite of an infected mosquito. Because West Nile encephalitis is a viral infection, antibiotics are not effective and there is no specific treatment available.

What you can do to prevent your pond from being a mosquito breeding site

Mosquitoes most commonly associated with West Nile virus often breed in artificial containers that contain stagnant water. They are much less frequently found in natural habitats like salt marshes, wetlands, large bodies of water or streams. They do not tend to breed in ponds which have a feeder stream or exit stream or moving water. The mosquito does not tend to breed in ponds that have fish, frogs, turtles or waterfowl. This wildlife will feed on the mosquito larvae before it is able to complete its life cycle to an adult mosquito.

Mosquitoes NEED stagnant water to lay their eggs. To reduce the mosquito population around your home, reduce or eliminate all stagnant water.

- Check around your property to remove any water-holding containers, especially tin cans, plastic containers, old tires, buckets, drums, wheelbarrows and bottles.
- Install a decorative fountain or pump system to a large still pond to create water movement.
- For very small artificial ponds or birdbaths, change the water at least twice a week to prevent mosquito larvae from completing its life cycle.
- Fresh water can be added to small ponds or birdbaths. Be sure when adding water to overflow pond or birdbath to ensure expelling of larvae.
- Be sure to have a pump or waterfall installed in smaller garden ponds that would normally remain still.
- Clean vegetation and debris from the edges of ponds.
- Keep the grass cut short and trim the shrubs to eliminate hiding places for adult mosquitoes.
- Fill in hollow tree stumps and rot holes that hold water with sand or concrete.
- If your pond does not empty into any water course, you may be able to apply larvicide. Before applying larvicide, contact the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to determine whether a permit is required.
- Use a low toxicity biopesticide, like Bti (*Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*), a live bacteria that is deadly to mosquito larvae, harmless to other living things. These larvicides come in granules or donut-shaped dunks, which are floating tablets which release Bti slowly. Be sure to follow label instructions when using any larvicide. Bti and other larvicides can be found in your local hardware or home improvement store.

For more information, call the West Nile Virus Information Line at (914) 813-5609 or Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or visit our website at Westchestergov.com/health

WNV Pond Fact Sheet Rev. 4-23-01 Paw

