

Bug off!

Written by Deb Egenberger
Friday, 08 July 2011 13:42 -



More standing water means more mosquitoes.

It happens every year.

People go outside after supper to enjoy a summer evening only to be driven back in front of the television by pesky critters looking for a meal of their own.

It's mosquito season again.

This year's abundant rain and river flooding have provided ample wet areas for mosquitoes to reproduce, meaning Gothenburg area residents might be bugged more than usual.

"It seems like the mosquitoes were pretty bad early this year," said city services director Shane Gruber. "Worse than normal."



Once-a-week spraying began in Gothenburg in mid-June and Gruber said city crews will likely continue the process through September.

The Anvil brand pesticide is sprayed throughout the town at dawn or dusk, usually on Thursdays or Fridays, Gruber said.

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It is designed to kill adult mosquitoes.

The chemical is approved by the Environmental Protection Agency, Gruber said, and it's far less hazardous to residents than common pesticides used decades ago.

The city is attacking the mosquito population another way as well.

Mosquito dunks are donut-shaped bacteria tablets that can be dropped in standing water such as ponds, barrels, fountains and bird baths.

The bacterial toxins in the dunks kill mosquito larvae, cutting down the number of nasty insects before they can bite.

"We're using dunks to treat wherever there is standing water," Gruber said, "like ditches and puddles."

Residents are urged to use the dunks, which are available in several brands, on their private property as well.

Heather Easton, wellness and environmental coordinator for Two Rivers Public Health Department, said dunks prevent mosquitoes and, in turn, prevent mosquito bites.

"You can buy them at pretty much any hardware store," she said. "If you want to keep water around like in stock tanks or bird baths, it's a good idea to stick one of these in there."

Dunks don't contain poisonous chemicals so they aren't harmful to animals or birds.

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Mosquitoes, on the other hand, have been called one of the deadliest living things on earth because they transmit such life-

threatening diseases as malaria, encephalitis and the recent U.S. danger of West Nile virus.

Two Rivers Public Health Department began trapping, counting and testing mosquitoes in its seven-county area in June.

The first pool of mosquitoes to test positive for West Nile was collected in Dawson County near Lexington on June 14.

Easton said so far, no positive birds or humans have been reported in the district but she said it is important to remember that the majority of human West Nile cases aren't likely to show up until later in the summer.

"That's not to say it isn't already here, so people need to be prepared," she said.

Prevention is the best policy. Easton suggests anytime people are outside they should wear a bug repellent containing DEET.

"The greater concentration of DEET, the better the coverage," she said.

And while sunscreen/bug repellent combinations may seem like a good idea, Easton suggests keeping those products separate.

"People don't generally reapply sunscreen as often as they should bug repellent," she said.

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So Easton tells people to keep the bug spray handy.

“It’s summer and it’s Nebraska. No matter what we do, there are going to be mosquitoes.”