

Preparing for Ticks and Mosquitoes: How to Protect Yourself and Your Community from Disease

Jeff Huckabee | *Mosquito Joe*

With the spring months right around the corner, now is the time to start preparing yourself and the properties you manage for mosquito and tick season. These pests are often overlooked so it's important to be educated on the threat mosquitoes and ticks can present so your community can prepare to be itch-free and healthy.

Chester County, Pennsylvania has the highest incidence of Lyme Disease in the nation and 2017 was a record year for tick activity in this area. Its rural and suburban surroundings make an ideal habitat for the ticks that carry tick-borne illnesses such as Lyme Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, and Anaplasmosis. These diseases are major health concerns, reinforcing the need to prevent tick bites.

Ticks can carry the pathogens for ten human diseases and spread illnesses that can cause symptoms such as fever, headache, chills, and muscle aches. Ticks are among the most efficient carriers of disease because they attach firmly to the skin, feed slowly, and may go unnoticed for a considerable amount of time while feeding. Ticks will make their 2018 debut around the month of April, or when the ground temperature is above 45 degrees Fahrenheit, so it's important to have a plan in place in advance.

There are ways to control the tick population around yards in your area to reduce the risk ticks present to families and their pets:

- Hire a mosquito control service to treat yards and grassy areas with a barrier spray.
- Clear tall grass around homes and at the edge of lawns.
- Mow the lawn and surrounding areas frequently.
- Keep playground equipment, decks, and patios away from the edge of yards and trees.
- Remove trash from the yard as frequently as possible to avoid giving ticks a place to hide.



- Put up a fence to keep unwelcome animals from entering yards and bringing ticks with them.
- Talk to a veterinarian about the use of tick preventatives on pets.

We all know that being bitten by mosquitoes is no fun, leaving you itchy and irritated for days. But the annoyance families suffer from mosquitoes and other biting insects can be more than inconvenient – it can be downright deadly.

Mosquitoes can transmit over ten different diseases and are considered the deadliest animal on our planet, being responsible for over one million deaths each year. When it comes to our beloved furry friends, mosquitoes are also the vector for heartworms. Mosquitoes will be active around May in our area or once temperatures stay consistently over 50 degrees Fahrenheit, so being prepared before they even arrive is key.

There are things that you can do to reduce the mosquito population in the communities you manage:

- Hire a mosquito control service to apply a barrier spray to your area.
- Regularly empty ponds, bird baths, fountains, potted plants, buckets, barrels, tarps, kid toys, pet water dishes, or anything else that may gather water.
- Clean out gutters to avoid standing water – examine them for clots and damage that would cause water to collect.
- Drill holes in tire swings, trash cans or recycle bins to allow water to drain out.
- Use soil to fill in low areas in lawns and landscaped areas where rainwater may collect and stand for more than seven days.

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- Keep swimming pools clean, properly circulated and filtered. Keep children’s wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren’t being used.
- Repair leaky outdoor faucets.
- Cut grass and shrubs short, as adult mosquitoes gather to rest in shady, cool areas. Keep your yard weed-free and avoid overgrown vegetation.

The best solution for keeping mosquitoes and ticks away is to call in an expert who specializes in mosquito and tick control services. With these services, trained technicians treat common areas and communities with a barrier spray that eliminates mosquitoes, fleas, and ticks, protecting residents against these dangerous pests. The average treatment time takes around 20-30 minutes (depending on area size), and after a 30-minute period to let the product dry, yards are ready for kids and pets to resume playtime. Sprays are also great for weddings, reunions, or barbecues to protect attendees against unwanted bites.

In addition to educating property management staff and HOA leadership, it is important and beneficial to educate your residents. A mosquito and tick expert can disperse knowledge in a variety of ways including seminars at your community clubhouse, newsletters with important facts, informative collateral and websites, and fun social media communications.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Huckabee is the owner of Mosquito Joe of West Chester. He has a varied background, primarily in engineering, and is a CAI Educated Business Partner. Jeff works to educate consumers on the importance of mosquito and tick control services. He recognizes that each property is different and looks forward to meeting with property managers, HOA leadership, and local residents to determine the best avenue for spreading awareness for these services. E-mail Jeff at: jhuckabee@mosquitojoe.com.



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Control of the Asian Tiger is achieved by using the same control methods used for all mosquitoes such as controlling the locations where they can breed. I have inspected many communities for evaluations of mosquito breeding over the years and I find that there are a few locations that are the preferred breeding locations for these mosquitoes. Parking lot or roadway storm sewer inlets are a big problem. These storm sewer inlets have sumps in the bottom that allow leaves and other debris to settle below the outflow pipe into the sump to allow for water flow to the out pipe. These sumps retain water even when there has not been rain for a period of time. The sumps are below ground level, and out of sunlight which slow water evaporation. Rain gutters are another location that are preferred by mosquitos for breeding. Incorrect pitch to a gutter, and tree leaf clogs hold rainwater in these gutters and create an ideal location for mosquito breeding. All of these locations can be cleaned and treated to prevent mosquito infestation using products such as insect growth regulators and bacteria that attack the mosquito larvae and kill them before they become biting adults.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joe Silvestrini is President and CEO of Pest Control Technicians. Joe obtained his BS degree in Biology from Cabrini College in Radnor, Pennsylvania. He founded PCT in 1976 on the premise that there was a better, more scientific approach to pest management than the pest control industry was providing at the time. PCT is recognized by the US Environmental Protection Agency as a “Steward of the Environment.” Joe is a past president of the Pennsylvania & Delaware Valley Chapter of CAI and currently serves as a member of the Gold Star Committee. Joe can be contacted via e-mail at: jsil@pctbugfree.com.



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