

DELAWARE MOSQUITO CONTROL SECTION

FAQ #1. Why are the mosquitoes so bad around my house, and what can I do or whom can I call?

Many adult mosquitoes around the home often come from mosquito-production sites within the neighborhood or in close proximity to residential areas. To help minimize mosquito annoyances, homeowners should take steps to **eliminate or reduce standing or stagnant water** on or nearby their properties, including attending to potential mosquito-production habitats such as clogged rain gutters and downspouts, poorly-drained flat roofs, old tires, abandoned inground or aboveground swimming pools (including plastic kiddie wading pools), unused bird baths, depressions in boat cover-tarps, bilge water in boat bottoms, flower pot bottom liners, garbage cans or their upturned lids, discarded soda or paint cans, upright wheelbarrows, or any other types of structures or containers that can collect and hold water for 4 or more consecutive days. [Just imagine the numbers of nooks-and-crannies that might hold rainwater in an auto salvage yard or a scrap tire pile!] In addition, any grading of topsoil for grass planting or following septic system installation should ensure that rain or sprinkler-system water does not become puddled or trapped on the surface for any extended length of time. Ornamental ponds can also breed mosquitoes, and since you obviously want water here, other control measures might have to be taken – e.g. ensuring good flow or changeover of water to avoid stagnant conditions, stocking or raising fishes that eat mosquito larvae, or judicious treatment with an appropriate mosquito larvicide.

Mosquitoes can also breed in roadside ditches, wet woodland pools, or stormwater management basins where water is held for 4 or more consecutive days. In many situations, a homeowner has limited physical capability or legal ability to eliminate these nearby breeding sites, and as such should contact the Mosquito Control Section to report such problem areas, which might then lead to the Section helping to physically eliminate the breeding habitats, or to our making the reported problem sites part of the Section's surveillance and insecticide treatment program. Frequently, mosquito annoyances around the home might not originate from the immediate vicinity at all, since some mosquito species have flight ranges of 3-5 miles up to 10-15 miles away from their natal sites in order to seek bloodmeals – saltmarsh mosquitoes and some woodland species are well known for their long flight distances. A substantial amount of Delaware's saltmarsh mosquito production problems arise from Bombay Hook and Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuges, to then potentially affect people in off-Refuge locations, and it's only through good cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that we are able to spare many Delawareans from Refuge-produced mosquitoes. In such situations where a private landowner cannot do much to control the mosquitoes that eventually make it to his/her property, only the Section's intervention can help. When you have need to **contact the Mosquito Control Section** about an intolerable nuisance situation or a suspected breeding problem, in **New Castle County** or **northwestern Kent County** please call **836-2555** (our Glasgow operational HQ); and in the **remainder of Kent County or all of Sussex Counties** please call **422-1512** (our Milford operational HQ).

Since our field inspectors and surveillance/monitoring devices cannot be everywhere around the State during the time a mosquito brood is in progress, we rely in part upon receiving public complaints to help us target where we might best spend our limited resources. Your calling one of the two the numbers above is an important, valuable way to help us to focus our response actions, and your complaint situation will usually be verified as soon as possible through one or more of our field surveillance methods discussed in FAQ #3. For your getting the most rapid response from our control program, and for our most accurately receiving and recording the information you want to provide (and that we need to have), **we ask that you call us directly, rather than your first going through an elected official or third party** (i.e. please do not immediately call your State Senator, State Representative or a County official) – if for some reason you become dissatisfied with our response or service, you could always then follow-up by contacting an elected official or third party, but even then we would first appreciate your direct callback, to see if we could still try to rectify your problem.

One exception to your first calling the Mosquito Control Section is that if you live in an incorporated municipality and desire to request spraying for relief from biting adult mosquitoes, you must first contact your appropriate city or town official, since by our Spray Policy we only provide such spraying services within a municipality’s borders only upon official requests from city or town officials. If you do not know who your appropriate local officials might be, you can call the Mosquito Control Section and we will provide you with their names and phone numbers. Additionally, for residential subdivisions in unincorporated areas of New Castle County, the Mosquito Control Section prefers to have citizen requests for adult mosquito control services to come through local homeowner or civic associations, conveyed by the associations to the Section on an annual basis.

Please understand that during periods of peak mosquito outbreaks, our agency often receives dozens of calls per day, and within just several days this can amount to a backlog of hundreds of complaints. When such problems pile-up, as they all too frequently do, we are then forced to prioritize even further where and when we’ll treat, trying to provide the most relief to the most people in the fastest time; as such, depending upon your situation from a statewide perspective, you or your neighbors might not always get as rapid a response as you might desire. But as always, no matter how you might end-up requesting our control services, or where you might end-up in our prioritizations for response, we will continue to try to do the best we can with the working resources we’ve been provided.