

DELAWARE MOSQUITO CONTROL SECTION

FAQ #11. There are a lot of biting flies around my house or yard that I don't like (or gnats or ticks or wasps, etc.). Can't Mosquito Control do something to get rid of them?

While the Mosquito Control Section frequently receives calls for help not related to mosquito problems, **unfortunately the answer here is NO** (even if you get mad at us). By our enabling State statute, for pest management purposes we are charged with and only allowed to take actions that control mosquitoes. Given the varied and vast amounts of mosquito-breeding habitats in Delaware and the long flight ranges of some mosquito species, plus the State's high human population density, coupled with the intolerable quality-of-life and human health threats that severe mosquito infestations can cause, our just battling mosquitoes gives us plenty to do. Our trying to attend to any other pest problems would be beyond our capabilities in terms of time, staffing, budget or other resources, and legally not in our authority to do anyhow. But this doesn't mean that we still can't provide you some advice or guidance, which we do below.

There are many species of biting flies in Delaware – greenhead flies in or near saltmarshes; deer flies where forested edges or shrubby areas abut marshes or open fields, especially along the coast; horse or stable flies around farms; and shore flies that can be quite annoying ankle-level biters along our beaches. Biting gnats (punkies or no-see-ums) at times can be very annoying, especially in late spring and early summer along tidal wetland margins or near other watery/muddy areas. In recent years the public has become much more aware of tick-borne problems because of the emergence and widespread nature in Delaware of Lyme disease, spread by the very small deer tick, which can also transmit human granulocytic ehrlichiosis (HGE); other tick-borne concerns in Delaware are associated with the wood or dog tick, as a carrier of Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and the lone star tick, capable of transmitting human monocytic ehrlichiosis (HME). Calls will also come to us for what to do about problems with bees, hornets, wasps, yellow jackets, velvet ants, etc., which can be a special concern to those individuals susceptible to anaphylactic shock from their stings. We'll occasionally get questions about chiggers ("red bugs"), or if the spider that somebody saw in their storage shed was a black widow. We've also taken queries as far afield as gypsy moth spraying, or dealing with concerns about rabies transmission. Even calls about bats in the attic, skunks under the porch, snakes in the crawlspace, beavers flooding the driveway, or moles in the lawn have come our way. Without spending an inordinate amount of time trying to explain to the public that we're not the agency or personnel to call about such problems or issues, we still courteously and patiently try to point these often distraught callers in the right direction, concerning both what we can and can't do, and who they might want to contact next.

We recommend that for many non-mosquito pest problems a first point-of-contact be the **University of Delaware Cooperative Extension Service**, with the Extension Service having offices in all 3 counties. Expert agents in the Cooperative Extension Service can give you advice about how to handle that wasp or hornet problem, or how to

lessen biting fly problems (e.g. they can give you a handout showing you how to construct a fly box trap for reducing greenhead fly populations adjacent to saltmarshes). If you bring in the tick that you found crawling in your bed or that you pulled off your leg, or a specimen of any other type of unknown insect, spider, or invertebrate critter of interest that you might have in-hand, they can usually have it identified for you. The Extension Service is also the obvious place to call for questions about garden or ornamental plant pests, as well as agricultural crop pests. The Extension Service phone number to call in **New Castle County** is **831-2506**; for **Kent County** call **730-4000**; for **Sussex County** call **856-7303**.

For additional questions related to agricultural, forest or ornamental plant pests, including concerns about gypsy moths, one can call the **Delaware Department of Agriculture** offices in Dover at **739-4811**. For wildlife-oriented pest problems or rabies, we suggest that you start by calling our Division's **Wildlife Section**, with offices in Dover at **739-9912**. In many cases or situations no matter whom you first contact, the final solution to your problem will often be you'll have to try to best handle it by yourself (after getting all the good advice and guidance you can); or you might have to call upon the professional services of a **commercial exterminator or pest control company**, who in almost all cases will know what to do and how to get it done safely.