

# Insights into Mosquito Control

By Norm Shea, Director of Lakes Management

Interest and concern about mosquitoes has been almost as prevalent as the mosquitoes themselves this year. The 9.4 inches of rain in August, most of it coming the last week of the month, coupled with some exceptionally high tides, also at the end of the month created optimal conditions for mosquitoes to flourish. And flourish they did. Early September brought some of the most widespread populations recorded since the Lakes Management/Mosquito Abatement Department began keeping records back in 1991.

A common misconception regarding mosquitoes is that they come from the ponds and lakes on the island. This is not true. Waterbodies that support fish populations are not breeding grounds for mosquitoes because the fish consume the mosquito larvae. Areas of standing water where fish populations are not present are the areas where mosquitoes thrive. KICA staff has carried out an extensive survey of these areas and uses a biological product to control larvae there.

Another area that is not well understood is the role of the Community Association's Mosquito Abatement Department. KICA's Mosquito Abatement Department carries out control operations in concert with Charleston County's Mosquito Control program. On a weekly basis during mosquito season, usually from June through October, the Community Association's department conducts mosquito counts in the 30 zones making up the island. The areas of the island that will be sprayed that week are determined from these counts. Spraying is then carried out using a fogger mounted in the back of a pickup truck. This is usually done toward the end of the week between the hours of 4:00 and 6:00 AM. If mosquito populations are great enough that truck-mounted spraying cannot provide effective control, the County will conduct an aerial spraying. Aerial sprayings usually occur only once or twice a year.

As previously mentioned, there are limits to the results truck-mounted fogging can achieve. The area covered by this type of operation is 150 feet on each side of the truck. Many front yards are larger than that. And this range is decreased in areas of heavy vegetation. The effectiveness is further limited by the fact that spraying must be conducted from a drivable area, primarily a roadway and in some cases a leisure or golf trail. In most cases we cannot spray "behind someone's house" as is often requested. We also only spend a brief period around any given property in the process of covering large areas of the island. Mosquitoes not contacted by the spray while it is in the air are not affected.

Control is further complicated by the fact the different mosquitoes are out at different parts of the day. Some species are out at dawn and dusk, some only at night and some only during the day. For the daytime biters, nighttime operations have little effect.

The arrival of the West Nile virus to South Carolina makes mosquitoes more than just a nuisance and people are understandably concerned. There are several types of products available commercially that provide more localized control for longer portions of the day. These mosquito traps work by using an attractant to lure the mosquitoes in where they are then sucked into the machine using a type of vacuum. Mosquito traps can be either electric or propane operated and are available at Lowes or Cross Seed. These may not be for everyone but in some areas where other types of control are not adequate, they may be an option.

The following are a few things you can do around your residence to reduce mosquito populations. A mosquito can carry out the entire aquatic stage of its life cycle in less than a tablespoon of water. So be sure to change water in birdbaths weekly, refill pet water bowls regularly, and empty any excess water in flowerpot bases. Also make sure there are no areas of standing water in buckets, pockets of tarps or other items.

Prior to mosquito control operations, notification is posted at the Community Association's website at [www.kiawah-owners.org](http://www.kiawah-owners.org) and the menu board at the Main Gate. In addition, the Association maintains a Chemical Sensitivity List. For individuals on this list, a buffer area is maintained around their residence where no truck-mounted spraying occurs. To be added to the list, call 843-708-3608 or email [kicalakes@kiawah-owners.org](mailto:kicalakes@kiawah-owners.org).

