

## GUEST OP-ED

# What's the Buzz? Preparing for Mosquito Season

By Marianne Dalton, RN

Summertime on the ocean. Backyard barbecues, outdoor sports, days at the beach, walks at Deer Island, all privileges Winthrop residents enjoy. One privilege that is not appreciated is the cloud of mosquitoes that often accompany all these outdoor activities.

What measures can be taken to avoid the nuisance and health hazards presented by mosquitoes?

Preventing mosquito bites involves more than just swatting or using repellent. Any water that is standing more than 5 days outdoors is an invitation to mosquitoes laying eggs. Water collecting on swimming pool covers, birdbath water that is not changed/cleaned regularly, clogged gutters, trash/recycling containers uncovered outdoors, even something as small as a bottle cap with water in it can be a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Once the breeding sites of mosquitoes have been addressed in your yard, the next step is avoidance. Long sleeves and pants, and use of repellents with EPA/CDC-approved active ingredients are key to reducing mosquito (and tick) bites. This also lessens the risk of illnesses borne by these pests. Avoid outdoor activity when mosquitoes are most active. All these measures should be taken until the first hard frost.

But what can be done besides avoidance and use of repellent? And how can residents stay informed about the presence of EEE, West Nile Virus, and other arboviruses in their community?

This is where the Northeast Massachusetts Mosquito Control District (NEMMC) enters the picture. The Town of Winthrop subscribes to the services of NEMMC, along with 31 other Massachusetts municipalities, for a flat yearly fee. This fee includes surveillance, ground larviciding, catch basin treatments, manual ditch maintenance, adulticiding, barrier treatments, tire recycling, property inspections,

mosquito habitat mitigation, research and development, education and outreach, and social media.

NEMMC guidelines recommend larviciding as a first line of defense. Spraying (adulticiding) is actually less effective as it only affects the mosquitoes flying at the time of spraying; there is no residual effect from the spraying. Of note, salt marsh mosquitoes are daytime flyers and biters; the evening spraying has little effect on these pests.

NEMMC monitors for presence of arboviruses by trapping and testing the mosquitoes, taking samples from various traps that are scattered at strategic points throughout the town of Winthrop. If specimens are positive for EEE or West Nile Virus, the Board of Health will be notified and NEMMC will help coordinate a plan of action.

The Winthrop Board of Health has voted this year to allow residents to send requests for spraying and/or larviciding directly to the NEMMC, either by requesting service on their website at: <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/323ede5d6f1f44eb91e930c7d443d380>, or by telephone: (978) 352 2811. Calls can be made to NEMMC during office hours (7:00 am – 3:30pm) or after hours a message can be left on their voicemail system. Please leave your name, full street address, town, and phone number.

The newly designed website of NEMMC is user-friendly and has easy-to-access educational material on mosquitoes, habitat, mission of the NEMMC, and frequently asked questions. Please visit their website at: <https://www.nemassmosquito.org>.

WCAT is televising a Zoom presentation recorded by NEMMC on March 31, 2022 for local boards of health. This provides a good overview of the mosquito control services provided by NEMMC.

Please stay safe from mosquito bites and have a peaceful summer!

*Marianne Dalton, RN, is a member of the Winthrop Board of Health*