



News Release

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Help Fight the Mosquito Bite

Residents across three Okanagan regional districts will hear a lot about mosquitoes this summer. They're being asked to help 'fight the bite' and reduce mosquito breeding habitat.

The Central Okanagan, Okanagan-Similkameen and North Okanagan regional districts have combined their efforts on a summer long media campaign. Television and radio commercials and online ad links will provide information for residents on what they can do to protect against mosquitoes and West Nile Virus.

Regional District of Central Okanagan Communications Coordinator Bruce Smith says, "The regional districts have been coordinating their media messaging for several years. Mosquitoes don't know the boundaries between the regional districts and local governments. The steps that residents can take to support these regional programs are the same whether you're in the south, central or north Okanagan. By reducing mosquito breeding habitat and protecting you and your family from mosquitoes, we can help reduce the potential risk of West Nile Virus."

And the recent warm temperatures have picked up the pace of the annual fight against mosquito larvae throughout the Central Okanagan.

Monitoring and treatment is underway of mosquito breeding locations on public and Westbank First Nation lands across the Regional District as part of its Nuisance Mosquito/West Nile Virus Risk Reduction program.

Smith adds, "At least once a week these known breeding locations are visited to monitor and minimize mosquito larval development. Residents can report mosquito concerns on public land by calling 1-866-679-8473."

This summer, the Regional District has hired a mosquito control contractor, BWP Consulting Inc. to conduct all larval mosquito control within the Regional District. BWP's Cheryl Phippen says, "This spring has been exceptionally wet and many of the larval development habitats are larger than usual and have high densities of mosquito larvae. Residents should expect higher than normal numbers of nuisance and potential West Nile Virus mosquitoes throughout the summer. Individuals should be protecting themselves by wearing mosquito repellent containing DEET and light coloured clothing with long sleeves and long pants, especially at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are at their worst."

This year the Ministry of Health has provided almost \$270,000 for the annual West Nile Risk Reduction Program that attempts to control the mosquito larvae of the specific species that are capable of transmitting West Nile Virus. This monitoring and treatment is being done in over 300 known breeding locations throughout the Regional District and Westbank First Nation reserves, as well as more than 11,000 roadside catch basins.

The integrated mosquito control program is designed to reduce the potential risk of the West Nile Virus, which is primarily spread through the bite of certain species of infected mosquitoes. So far this year, there haven't been any reported cases of the virus originating in B.C. Last year, there was one human case of West Nile Virus reported in the Central Okanagan and a number of dead birds were collected and tested positive for the virus.

While the region-wide program focuses on public and crown lands, individuals have an important role to play in reducing standing water and potential breeding sites on their property. The species that are capable of transmitting West Nile Virus lay their eggs in standing water and it takes between seven and 14 days for the larvae to grow into adults that are ready to fly. Remove standing water sources and any unused items that collect water such as old tires. Cover rain barrels and at least twice a week drain standing water from items like pool covers, saucers under plant pots or garbage cans. Mosquito larvae can also develop in birdbaths, wading pools or pet bowls, so water should be changed at least two times a week. Remove water that gathers in unused swimming pools and on swimming pool covers and aerate water in ponds or add fish that will eat mosquito larvae.

There are excellent resources available to help you and your family during the mosquito season. Visit the Mosquito Control page on the Regional District website regionaldistrict.com/mosquitoes for information about the program and links to the Interior Health and Centre for Disease Control West Nile Virus webpages.

Once again the Central Okanagan, Okanagan-Similkameen and North Okanagan regional districts are working together on a valley-wide radio and television advertising campaign designed to raise awareness of their Mosquito Control and West Nile Virus Risk Reduction programs and what residents can do to reduce mosquito breeding areas and the risk of getting West Nile Virus.

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Regional District of Central Okanagan Mosquito Control Program

Measures	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Known Breeding Sites	300+ *	294	294	294	210
# of Application Sites	127	126	151	116	117
# of Applications	549	442	585	652	478
Average # of Applications per Site	2.5	2.7	2.1	3.3	4

* Additional sites added with monitoring of locations on Westbank First Nation reserves

The mandate of the program is to provide effective and efficient mosquito control through the reduction and management of mosquito larvae in an environmentally friendly manner in order to contribute positively to the quality of life and minimize the risk of West Nile Virus to residents in the Central Okanagan.

Program Questions and Answers

When does it run?

From April through September each year known breeding locations on public land throughout the Regional District, its member municipalities and Westbank First Nation reserves are inspected for signs of mosquito larvae. There needs to be standing water for at least seven days for mosquitoes to thrive. If larvae are found, environmentally friendly pellets are “seeded” into the water, which kills the larvae within 48 hours. The area is visited at least once every week to ensure there are no new hatches.

What is the pellet used in the larvicide program?

The larvicide acronym is BTI for *Bacillus Thuringiensis Israelensis*, a bacterial extract that the larvae stage of the mosquito has to ingest. The proteins in the ingested bacterium rupture the gut of the mosquito larvae. BTI is short-lived and is non-toxic. However, as a precaution, it may not be applied in water that is connected to a fish-bearing stream.

How many sites are monitored?

There are almost 300 known mosquito larvae breeding locations on public lands in the Central Okanagan as well as on Westbank First Nation reserves. Also more than 11,000 catch basins are monitored and treated as needed throughout the Central Okanagan.

Who licenses the program?

The Regional District of Central Okanagan has a permit from the Provincial Government to conduct the larvicide application program. The provincial government licenses those employees who apply the larvicide. The RDCO keeps a record of the location, number of applications needed and the volume of BTI used.

Will the Regional District check possible mosquito breeding sites on private property?

No, RDCO staff is not allowed to go onto private property to check for mosquitoes. Residents can report concerns with mosquitoes on public land by calling 1-866-679-8473.

Why is this type of nuisance control program used?

This program is sensitive to the need to protect our environment and has proven effective in controlling the nuisance mosquito population throughout the Central Okanagan while also reducing the potential risk of the West Nile Virus.