

# Managing Mosquitoes Without Poisoning People

**What to do BEFORE pesticides or West Nile Virus get to your neighborhood**

**W**ith the concerns of West Nile virus (WNV) spreading across the United States, it is crucial that public health officials explore practices that do not unnecessarily rely on toxic chemicals that have adverse effects on people and the environment. Since WNV has been tracked in 27 states and the District of Columbia, the concern about pesticide contamination and poisoning is growing. Claims that pesticides are integral to pest management for public health protection overshadow sound planning to adopt effective mosquito prevention measures.

As U.S. residents raise fears about potentially fatal mosquito-borne illnesses, public officials are often pressured into ordering broadcast pesticide spraying because it is a quick and public response. Yet, it may not be the most effective response. To assist policymakers and public health officials in solving this dilemma, Beyond Pesticides is working with public health professionals, mosquito control officers, and environmental health groups in the development of a mosquito management strategy that protects the public from both mosquito-borne diseases and the pesticides used to kill mosquitoes.

The *Public Health Mosquito Management Strategy* (which follows) emphasizes community education, prevention, and monitoring methods for both mosquito-borne illnesses and pesticide-related illnesses. Thousands of people become sick from pesticide exposure each year. Residents are increasingly concerned about pesticide spraying near their homes, schools, organic farms, and other sensitive areas.

While many counties have good intentions, their policies and programs may be dangerous and inadequate by

relying too heavily on spraying pesticides to kill adult mosquitoes. Reports have been filed that cite ineffective and hazardous spray programs targeting nuisance mosquitoes, or triggered by a finding of infected dead birds far from the site of infected mosquitoes. In response to these concerns, this management strategy also discusses the low efficacy of using pesticides to kill adult mosquitoes, and the

facts about West Nile virus, and mosquito-borne diseases such as St. Louis encephalitis, and dengue fever.

While spraying pesticides is not recommended, if a community decides to do this, it is important that it sprays responsibly. First, the public should be notified in advance so that exposure to dangerous chemicals can be avoided. Second, pesticide operators should be properly protected and trained on when, where, and how to spray.

Your help is needed! Beyond Pesticides would like to work with you and your community to adopt the *Public Health Mosquito Management Strategy: Managing Mosquitoes and Insect-Borne Diseases with Safety in Mind*. Together we can: 1) Identify your local public health officials (see [www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org) or contact *Beyond Pesticides* for more details); 2) Express concern about the dangers of pesticides

and insect-borne diseases, and the need for an effective mosquito prevention strategy; 3) Provide a copy of the management strategy to your local public health officials; 4) Organize the community in support of the strategy; and, 5) Watchdog the implementation of the community's mosquito management practices.

Please contact *Beyond Pesticides* for a mosquito management organizing toolkit (\$5.00).



## Where in the States is West Nile Virus?

Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin.