

5 Steps to Stop the Spraying



a **BEYOND PESTICIDES** factsheet

701 E Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003 ■ (202) 543-5450
info@beyondpesticides.org ■ www.beyondpesticides.org

You just found out you and your community are being sprayed by hazardous pesticides for mosquito control. You want to do something. You want to learn more. Where do you go? What do you do? Follow these first 5 steps and you will be on the way to getting a more sound approach to mosquito management implemented in your community. The steps here are just recommendations and do not necessarily have to be in order nor do they have to be entirely fulfilled by just you. There have been cases of a single person, working to protect his wife and family from pesticides, took a few simple actions in each of the steps provided here, and got the spraying to stop.

1. Learn About the Spraying.

First step is to find out the details of who, what, when, why, where, and how of the spray program. Who is spraying? Which agency is responsible for mosquito control in your area? Is it the department of health or agriculture, or a quasi-public abatement district? Who orders the spraying to be done? Is it the city, the county or the mayor's office? Most importantly, **what** are the criteria being used that would trigger the spraying of adulticides (pesticides used for adult mosquitoes)? What chemicals are being used (see step 2)? Is there a schedule of exactly **when** and **where** the spraying will take place? After all, even the CDC agrees people should be notified so they know how to protect themselves from pesticide exposure. **How** is the agency informing you and your community of spraying activity, how to protect yourself from pesticide exposure, and can residents opt-out? Are there alerts through a website, the newspaper or TV, public service announcements? Is there a list of people who choose not to be sprayed?

Lastly, is there a West Nile Virus (WNV) response plan for mosquito management for your area? You will have to ask a local official. If so, get a copy of the plan and research its basic features to understand what actions the local government in charge is supposed to be taking to control mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases. If there is no response plan for your local area, why not? What is the agency using as reference for mosquito con-



trol in your area? Chances are your state has a WNV response plan. Review it. What does it say about the use of adulticides?

2. Know the Pesticides.

The second step involves the actual chemicals being used. Which adulticide is being used? The government may likely try to convince you that the chemical is safe. Do not agitate the official with too many questions of product safety, ask your questions simply and matter-of-factly. You may be given either the name of the product or the active ingredient by your local vector control official. For example, Anvil 10+10 is a product, sumithrin is the active

ingredient. If you have access to the internet you can type in the product name along with "active ingredient" into a search engine with good results. You may also call a local pesticide organization or Beyond Pesticides. Next you must learn the basic points of the chemical's toxicity and its known and unknown effects on human health and the environment. This knowledge is extremely important if you want these pesticides to stop being used. Most likely, there are scientific studies that back your concerns. People must begin to learn of the hazards of pesticides in order to weigh the risks of their use. Information on pesticide drift, insect resistance, and the questionable effectiveness of adulticides can also be very helpful.

3. Research Alternatives.

If your local government is dependent on chemical mosquito control (for nuisance

as well as WNV), you will need effective alternatives in order to reduce the use of pesticides. Effective mosquito management practices that do not involve the use of adulticides are intuitive and obvious and not hard to memorize. Basically, they include reducing breeding sources, larval control, biological controls (such as mosquito eating fish) and public education. Pay particular attention to what alternatives might be missing or most needed in your community. Where can your local government improve? Increased public education efforts can reduce many breeding areas and help people avoid being bitten. The use of larvicides to kill mosquitoes before they become biting adults is more effective and less hazardous than adulticiding. Use the models of other communities that have successfully used effective mosquito management techniques to battle WNV without the use of adulticides.

4. Gather Support. Now that you are armed with information on who is spraying, what chemical is being used, the hazards of the chemical and the basic alternatives you can start reaching out in your community to find others who are concerned just like you. (In reality, it does not matter the order since many people may have come together first before any of you had any information. Regardless of which happens first, working with others is critical to success.) First contact any local environmental or pesticide groups that may have already worked on this issue. Talk to your friends and neighbors or local co-ops that might support you. Try also cancer groups, asthma groups, PTAs, homeowner groups, and neighborhood coalitions. Contact local professionals, such as doctors and local university entomologists, and find out their views on mosquito spraying. If you gather enough support you may want to hold a meeting to discuss the issue and collectively decide what steps to take next.

5. Present Your Case. After you have worked on the recommendations above you are ready to move to the next step and start getting your message out. Here are some ideas:

- Start an e-mail listserve to communicate with your supporters and share information.

- Put up posters and hand out flyers in local gathering places to inform other community members about the spraying and the dangers related to it. You can solicit volunteers to help. Always have a take action section telling the public whom they can call and what they can do.

- Gather signatures from local residents who do not want their property sprayed for mosquitoes. Create a petition for an opt-out plan (if one does not exist) and present it to the appropriate local agency. If there is an opt-out plan, inform people about it and get them to sign up. Use postcards, flyers, tabling – target parents picking up children from school, hospitals, elderly communities, etc. Demand 100-300 ft buffer zones around no-spray areas to account for drifting pesticides.



- Gather expert signatures from the professional community. Have local doctors and other medical professionals, university entomologists, biologists or other professors who oppose spraying sign a petition that can also be presented to local government.

- Write a Position Statement with others in your community that takes a stand on your government's use of adulticides. Offer better alternatives and recommendations.

- Contact the media to publicize your message. Write letters to the editor or opinion editorials for your local newspapers. Call in to a local radio talk show. Set up a public service announcement (for how to get rid of mosquitoes, or avoid bites). You can also request an editorial board meeting to present your concerns.

- Organize a public forum. Bring together a wide range of community members to discuss the issue. Arrange for local experts to speak, invite the media, policymakers, local officials, organizations, and the public. You can also ask your city council or municipality to hold a public meeting to discuss your community's options for mosquito management.

For more information contact:

Beyond Pesticides, 701 E Street SE #200, Washington DC 20003. Phone 202-543-5450, fax 202-543-4791, info@beyondpesticides.org.

BEYOND PESTICIDES WNV RESOURCES:

Step 1:

- Beyond Pesticides West Nile Virus Project Page <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/mosquito/>
Beyond Pesticides Tools For Activists: <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/mosquito/ACTIVIST/>
- o Model Policies and Practices will highlight some WNV Response Plans that have model components.
 - o Weblinks and Links to Links provide outside information on WNV and state plans.

Step 2:

- Beyond Pesticides Tools For Activists: <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/mosquito/ACTIVIST/>
- o Factsheets on chemicals and WNV
- Beyond Pesticides: <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/schools/resources/index.htm>
- o Facts and Figures-Pesticides & Schools: Evidence of pesticide hazards to children
- Email Beyond Pesticides with questions at info@beyondpesticides.org

Step 3:

- Beyond Pesticides WNV publications: <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/mosquito/reportsandpublications/>
- o Public Health Mosquito Management Strategy
- Beyond Pesticides Tools For Activists: <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/mosquito/ACTIVIST/>
- o Model Policies and Practices: Lyndhurst Landmark Ordinance
 - o Factsheets: The Truth About Mosquitoes, Pesticides & West Nile virus

Step 4:

- Beyond Pesticides Tools For Activists: <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/mosquito/ACTIVIST/>
- o Linking To Other Organizations (State Pages)
 - o How to organize in your community (and talk to your neighbors)

Step 5:

- o For free Listservs: <http://www.yahogroups.com> or <http://www.topica.com>.
- Free Conference calls: <http://www.freeconference.com/>
- Beyond Pesticides Tools For Activists: <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/mosquito/ACTIVIST/>
- o Flyers, Media Tips and Sample Petitions and Opt-out forms: Find examples of flyers used by other communities to get the attention of the public and ask them to take action by calling local officials.
 - o Flyers, Media Tips and Sample Petitions and Opt-out forms: Find examples of opt-out petitions, exemption forms, request for city council hearing and more.
 - o Flyers, Media Tips and Sample: Find tips in getting your message out to the press via letters, Public Service Announcements, editorial board meetings and more.
 - o Letters to the Editor and Policy Makers: Sample letters and editorials written by many others concerned about spraying provide various compelling points and give you insights into framing your own argument.
 - o How To Organize In Your Community: Find resources on organizing and talking to your neighbors.
 - o Position Statements & Platforms Against Spraying: Make your own statement with your group and/or join AIMM, the national Alliance for Informed Mosquito Management with Beyond Pesticides. Show your local decision makers that you are not a fringe group – there are hundreds of others across the country also concerned about the use of adulticides for mosquito management and WNV.
 - o Expert Position Statements and Resources: See various expert statements, including a petition by nearly 100 doctors and other medical professionals from Stamford, CT who successfully said no to spraying.



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