

# Dealing with mosquitoes related to the flood

Floods often lead to increased mosquito numbers which can lead to increased numbers of bites and potential for increases in mosquito-borne diseases. Standing water from heavy rainfall and flooding provides perfect conditions for mosquito breeding. You need to play your part and help reduce the number of potential breeding sites by taking the following actions in and around your house. During flood events, the floodwater mosquito (*Aedes vexans*) can become extremely abundant and annoying. The bulk of Iowa mosquito bites come from this pest, but fortunately it is only a minimal transmitter for West Nile Virus and other human diseases. This year's flood is forecast to be extensive and long-lasting.

## Actions to take

- When cleaning up your house and yard following a flood, get rid of potential mosquito breeding sites to help prevent mosquito-borne diseases.
- Remove stagnant pools of water around your house and yard. This may involve clearing debris from ditches, cutting small channels to help pooling water drain, or filling in holes and vehicle wheel ruts.
- Remove flood-water deposited debris on and around your property. While a lot of this debris may be partially buried, it often contains enough water to breed large numbers of mosquitoes. In addition to pooled water, rain or floodwater may have collected in containers around your yard, so make sure you tip them out and store them in a dry place, or throw them away.

Common mosquito breeding sites include potted plant bases (inside and outside), tires, tarpaulins, buckets, tin cans, plastic containers, roof gutters (if blocked by leaf debris), and boats.

## Avoid being bitten

Because the removal of or treatment of standing water will be nearly impossible in many areas, avoiding mosquitoes is difficult, but a priority.

- repair defective insect screens.
- wear insect repellent (a low concentration of DEET) whenever mosquitoes are present
- wear long, loose, light-colored clothing
- use flying insect spray or mosquito repellent coils according to the label

Although foggers and ULV sprayers are available for short term abatement of adult mosquitoes, their effectiveness is typically limited and best suited for targeted special needs (specifically declared health emergencies, etc.). For more information contact your ISU County Extension office.

You may hear of propane-driven devices that emit carbon dioxide to attract mosquitoes. The benefits of these are generally not research-based, but more testimonials. And, they are very expensive. These devices are intended to "attract" insects and as a result if they are used, they need to be located well away from living areas.

*\*\* Note: Thanks to Donald Lewis and Ken Holscher, ISU Extension Entomologists for assistance with the information.*