

CONCERNS OVER THE SPRAYING OF PESTICIDES FOR WEST NILE VIRUS IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

If you are concerned about our local government deciding to have your private property and public land and places (which may include your homes, daycare centers, schools, playgrounds, hospitals, parks, rivers and streams, etc.) sprayed with toxic adulticide pesticides for mosquitoes because of West Nile Virus (WNV) or other mosquito borne viruses found in Washtenaw County; please consider the following reasons why you don't want to be sprayed, and why you should contact your local government officials to voice your opposition immediately after reading this article.

For most humans, West Nile Virus (WNV) is still a low risk disease (more people die from the flu than WNV). Most people who get WNV are not even aware of being infected, and they will develop immunity for future infections. Less than 1 in 100 people bitten by an infected mosquito will develop serious forms of illness (encephalitis). Less than 10% of the 1% of those who develop encephalitis are at risk for severe or fatal infection. These are very low numbers. However, those at risk from WNV (the immune compromised and elderly) will be at a possible greater risk along with the general population (including unborn babies and children) for potential serious adverse health effects from widespread pesticide spraying. Evidence suggests that you and your children are statistically more likely to have an adverse reaction to the spraying of pesticides than contracting WNV.

Not using pesticides is considered a preventive measure in managing mosquito populations and preventing West Nile Virus cases according to new suggested evidence. Pesticide use may result in increases in infected mosquito numbers. Experts believe that pesticide induced immune suppression in all living things makes mosquitoes, birds, and humans far more vulnerable to viral infections. New studies show that pesticides actually weakens the blood brain barrier in humans. Another study shows that as far as West Nile Virus is concerned; it can only affect you dangerously if it crosses the blood brain barrier. Therefore, it is those individuals with weakened blood brain barriers who will most likely contract the serious manifestations of WNV (encephalitis, meningitis). This sets up a Catch-22 situation. If you spray pesticides; it will weaken blood brain barriers thereby setting up more potential victims to contract the serious forms of WNV or possibly other viral infections. There are other studies to show that the mosquitoes that are sprayed also develop weakened immune systems thereby becoming better vectors for transmitting WNV. If adulticide pesticides are used or continue to be used as a primary defense against WNV, some experts believe the virus will mutate into a stronger form as a defense mechanism against the pesticides; which could make the virus become more dangerous than the flu.

The pesticides commonly used for mosquitoes have serious health risks attached to them. The pesticides generally used are: Synthetic Pyrethroids (nerve poisons), which include Permethrin, Resmethrin (Scourge), and Sumithrin (Avid); Malathion (an organophosphate); and Piperonyl Butoxide (Anvil 2+2). Pyrethroids (which are neurotoxic) are associated with a broad array of human health impacts. Recent evidence shows that breast cancer cells proliferate at accelerated rates when exposed to pyrethroids. Human health effects may be most severe for developing unborn babies & young children; and include endocrine disruption, immune system suppression and nervous system effects. This doesn't even begin to address the "inert" ingredients (any ingredient in a pesticide formulation other than the active ingredient including carriers, emulsifiers, and synergists). These products can be far more dangerous than the base ingredients themselves.

The issue of pesticide "drift" (the airborne movement of a pesticide during or immediately after its application to a site not intended for its use) is also a real concern. Pesticide drift will enter your homes, schools, and workplaces and persist for days, weeks, months and even years.

According to the October, 1997 "Asthma Profile of Washtenaw County Public Health" with participation from University of Michigan, America Lung Association and other agencies); Asthma rates in Washtenaw County are higher than either estimated rates for the State of Michigan or the United States. Pyrethroids are known to cause and aggravate respiratory problems and allergic conditions. If these pesticides are used in our County; it would put many Asthmatic residents at great risk as well as possibly create new Asthma patients. Reactions can occur after just one exposure. Pyrethroids are related to the ragweed family (composite), and if anyone is allergic to ragweed; serious allergic reactions could occur including respiratory distress or failure. According to the Pesticide Management Education Program at Cornell University, "Asthmatic wheezing may be precipitated by exposure of predisposed individuals".

Widespread pesticide use is documented to harm many sensitive ecosystems. The use of a pesticide to eradicate one pest may, in turn, upset the delicate balance of many other natural species. Synthetic pyrethroids are toxic to many beneficial insects including all bees and honeybees, butterflies, and other essential pollinators. Natural mosquito predators are also killed but rebound much more slowly than mosquitoes setting the stage for future mosquito population explosions. Studies done in New York State showed a 15-fold increase in mosquitoes after repeated spraying; virtually all of who are now pesticide resistant. Non-target creatures killed by the pesticides include anything aquatic such as crayfish, fish, tadpoles, etc.

The aforementioned adulticide pesticides are also toxic to birds. Birds can also be indirectly affected by pesticides, if they have an effect on their food supply as well. In the year 2000, New York State Wildlife Pathologist, Ward Stone conducted tests on birds in New York State to determine cause of death. More than 80,000 birds were submitted to New York State's Pathology lab. It revealed that 31% actually tested positive for WNV; 67% tested negative for the virus. Not all the birds that tested positive for the disease actually died from it. PESTICIDES AND OTHER CHEMICALS KILLED OVER 48% OF THE BIRDS TESTED! The birds killed by pesticides include: American Robin, Bluebird, Blue Jay, Great Blue Heron, House Sparrow, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Saw-whet owl, American Crow, Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Dove, Canada Goose, and Cowbirds. Pesticide applications or residues also killed several score mammals including Grey Squirrels, a weasel, and a house cat.

We now ask all residents of Washtenaw County to contact their local public and health officials before the mosquito season begins and before they make any decisions. Tell them that you do not want any pesticides/insecticides used at any time for mosquitoes or any other pest in Washtenaw County due to the health risks posed to people, pets, birds, other animals, and plant life. Our County officials have been given literature outlining a safe alternative non-chemical approach to mosquito management strategies (which can also be applied to the Gypsy Moth problem). However, it takes the general public to speak up and voice their opinion to encourage our leaders and decision makers to pursue these safer alternatives.

Mosquito management can be done without resorting to toxic chemicals and pesticides. We need to protect human lives and the many sensitive ecosystems that; fortunately, still exist in Washtenaw County (at the present time). Where substances have been shown to have the potential for health and environmental damage, they should not be used. **SAY NO TO PESTICIDES! CALL TODAY BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE. OUR LOCAL LEADERS ARE NOW HAVING MEETINGS OVER THIS ISSUE.**

STOP THE PESTICIDES CAMPAIGN

PLEASE CALL THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE TO SAY NO TO PESTICIDES:

Washtenaw County Environmental Health Department (734) 222-3800

Washtenaw County Public Health Department (734) 484-7200

IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU ALSO CALL YOUR LOCAL MAYORS AND TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS!!!