

Website FAQs:

What do you do?

Santa Cruz County Mosquito and Vector Control is a division of the County Agricultural Department and has been protecting public health for 25 years. As a public health agency, we monitor and control organisms that can transmit diseases to humans (also known as “vectors”).

Please contact our office at (831) 454.2590 (or by filling out an online Request for Service) for a free inspection or assistance with the following:

Mosquitoes:

We monitor mosquitoes by using specialized traps and by sampling water sources throughout the county. We control mosquitoes based on threshold levels that are determined by mosquito species (transmit disease) and their proximity to human populations. We try to treat mosquitoes while they are larvae (immature aquatic stage) to prevent them from developing into adults that can fly around, bite people, and spread disease. We offer free mosquito-eating fish to help control larval mosquitoes in your backyard pond.

[Click Here to Learn More & Request Service](#)

Dead Bird Pick-Up:

If you find a dead bird, please report it to (www.westnile.ca.gov), or call our office. We pick up and test dead birds. Infected birds are often the first indicator of West Nile virus activity in our county.

Ticks & Lyme Disease:

Conduct tick surveillance throughout the county and monitor populations for the bacteria that causes Lyme disease. We provide free tick identification and disease information during our hours (M-F, 8AM-4:00PM, except holidays – call ahead).

[Click Here to Learn More & Request Service](#)

Urban Wildlife & Rodents:

Rodents and other urban wildlife can carry bacteria and parasites on their bodies that can be a health risk to humans. We provide free Rodent and Urban Wildlife Exclusion Inspections to all residents. A trained and certified technician will conduct a perimeter inspection of the property and identify attractants and access points. Based on their findings, the technician will provide advice on how to eliminate the current problem and prevent rodents/wildlife from entering the home. We can provide a list of licensed pest control operators and wildlife removal specialists in the area for further assistance.

[Click Here to Learn More & Request Service](#)

Yellowjacket, Wasp & Bee Referrals:

We control yellowjackets in public areas that pose a potential hazard. We provide advice and referrals for yellowjackets and problem bees on private property.

[Click Here to Learn More](#)

Community Presentations & School Talks:

As part of our public health mission, we strive to educate the public on how to prevent vector-borne diseases. We offer free classroom talks and community presentations on any of the above topics.

What is a vector?

Vectors are any organism that can transmit disease or cause human discomfort, such as mosquitoes, ticks, flies, and yellow jackets.

Is there Zika virus in Santa Cruz County?

We have yet to find the invasive day-biting mosquitoes in our county that can carry Zika, but we continue to monitor for this and other mosquito-borne diseases—which is a key part of our agency’s mission. We control and monitor for existing and emerging disease vectors. You can help by dumping & draining backyard containers and reporting standing water or day-biting mosquitoes.

Do you “Spray”/ “fog”?

We use (Environmental Protection Agency) EPA-registered products that are applied directly to the water by trained and certified technicians. The applications are localized and stay on the water source. The products we use are specific towards the aquatic, larval stages of mosquitoes and pose very little risk to people, animals or fish.

We would treat flying adults when they become a threat to public health (according to state response guidelines). Large-scale adult treatments would need prior approval by the County Health Officer and Board of Supervisors.

Most of the larval control products we use are organic and listed by the Organic Materials Review Institute-OMRI (labeled for use on organic farms). As a public health agency, we use a combination of EPA-registered pesticides to protect public health and to combat resistance to those products.

Our technicians are trained and certified to ensure the best possible use of pesticides that protect public health. We use integrated mosquito management methods to ensure the most appropriate solution to each mosquito problem, emphasizing water management, source reduction and bio-control and will do what is needed to protect the community and the environment.

What about natural predators? Bats?

Fish, frogs, spiders, water beetles and dragonflies are excellent mosquito predators and help control mosquito populations. However, mosquitoes often hatch in large numbers before predators like frogs can catch up and eat them—mosquitoes have a very quick lifecycle (~1 week from egg to adult).

Bats prefer to eat larger flying insects (like moths), so public health pest managers do not believe that bats substantially contribute to mosquito control. Studies of wild bats have shown that mosquitoes make up less than one percent of their diet. More importantly, bats can transmit rabies to people and animals. In the most recent report for California, most of the rabies cases (85%) were due to exposure to bats. Promoting bat colonies increases the risk of human and bat contact, and they may leave bat boxes in winter and can nest in attics.

What repellents are safe to use? What are some DEET alternatives?

The California Department of Public Health states: use insect repellents containing the ingredients DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus or para-menthane-diol for long-lasting protection. If using sunscreen and insect repellent, apply sunscreen first and then the repellent. It is recommended and safe for pregnant women, and women who are breastfeeding, to use an EPA-registered insect

repellent according to the product label. Do not use insect repellent on infants less than two months of age.

Use the [“Choosing a Repellent” toolkit](#) to pick what will work best for you and your family.

What mosquito control products can I use at home?

You can find Mosquito Dunks© and Bits© at your local garden or hardware store or online for larger water sources around the yard, such as bird baths, ponds and fountains. The active ingredient in these products is the same as what we use and are derived from natural soil bacteria. Another good way to keep your ponds and un-maintained swimming pools from breeding mosquitoes is to call our office for free mosquito-eating fish. For other containers around the yard, dump and drain once a week!