



**Santa Cruz County**  
**Mosquito & Vector Control**  
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# WESTERN MOSQUITOFISH

(*Gambusia affinis*)



The mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis*), a live bearing North American topminnow is used extensively throughout the world as a mosquito larvae predator. Its wide use is attributed to its adaptability and hardiness, coupled with its ability to produce large numbers of offspring in a short period of time. A female will drop 40 to 60 fry per brood and may reproduce 3-6 times per summer.

Although mosquitofish are not native to California, they have been well established in many wetlands and drainage's within Santa Cruz County for the last 30 years. **As they may compete with native fish and amphibians, however, they should not be introduced into any natural systems.** They are most useful in animal water troughs, disused pools, wading ponds, and ornamental ponds. Check with California Fish and Game Department for any other pond or source.

Life expectancy of mosquitofish is 2 to 3 years although during the colder months a heavy die-off may occur. The female of the species reaches a size of 2.5 inches in length while males are smaller, typically under 1.5 inches in length.

Mosquitofish can tolerate water temperatures between 33°F and 104°F but prefer temperatures between 77°F and 86°F, and are often found in the shallow unshaded region of a pond.

They are generalistic feeders in that they eat just about anything. An adult fish is capable of eating 100-500 mosquito larvae in a day. During the warmer months they usually need no supplemental feeding but if no natural food is present, as in a filtered swimming pool, some fish food will be necessary for fish survival.

Algae in limited amounts will not harm the fish but may become unsightly. Most pet stores have or can secure for you a preparation with directions for use in fish pools to control algae.

Introducing fish into a pond is best done by placing the container with fish directly into the pond for 10-15 minutes or until the pond water and container water are near the same temperature. You may then release the fish into the pond.

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