



By ERIKA PRAFDER

IT'S that time of year again. We're barbecuing, camping and enjoying the backyard. But this unavoidably means guarding against the insects that can threaten your health.

While mosquitoes prefer rainfall to our recent oppressively hot weather, it's our economic climate that may increase their prevalence.

Foreclosures and abandoned properties mean untended yards and swimming pools, which become major breeding sources for mosquitoes during their breeding season (spring through fall), says Bill Donahue, Ph.D., an entomologist with Sierra Research Laboratories in Modesto, California.

"After feeding on the blood of an animal, they convert blood protein to egg protein and lay eggs in water. Their larvae are totally aquatic," reports Donahue. They especially prefer tree holes, standing water, marsh areas, ponds and birdbaths. Besides being carriers of the sometimes deadly

# What's the BUZZ?

## Avoid insect borne disease and annoying bites

West Nile virus and types of encephalitis, most mosquitoes are more of a nuisance than disease transmitters, he says. However, heartworms in dogs are also transmitted by mosquitoes, "which can be fatal or disabling," he adds.

If this bloodsucker bites you, wash the area with soap and water and avoid scratching. Calamine lotion can help relieve pain and anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen may also reduce swelling and redness. Aloe vera gel may provide relief as well.

Symptoms of West Nile include fever, headache, tiredness, body aches and occasionally a skin rash and swollen lymph glands.

Although there is no treatment for West Nile, sufferers with a severe case often need to be hospitalized for IV fluids, respiratory support and prevention of secondary infections.

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene began its schedule of West Nile virus spraying and aerial larviciding last month throughout The Bronx, Queens and Staten Island. Yet mosquitoes rank second as the leading carriers of

human disease. Public enemy number one is the tick.

About 100,000 Americans contracted Lyme disease, carried by deer ticks (hard ticks, pictured here), each year. These members of the spider family attach and feed on blood for hours to days. If you think you're not exposed to deer ticks unless you're in the woods, think again. "It just has to be a grassy area. You can be biking, out for a stroll, and still be exposed," says Donahue. Though we can't catch Lyme disease from dogs and cats, the ticks attached to

them can fall off and regroup themselves on you.

And since deer ticks primarily feed on mice, "Having a bird feeder can increase your risk of contracting Lyme Disease," says Donahue. Mice are attracted to birdseed on the ground, and thus can carry ticks to your yard.

Carefully inspect your children and pets after time spent outdoors. Remove ticks as soon as you notice them and call your doctor. Symptoms of a deer tick bite include a "bull's-eye" rash around the bite, but not

always. Flu-like symptoms may accompany the rash, including fever, chills, headaches, muscle aches and fatigue. Treatment is with antibiotics. Left untreated, the disease becomes serious and may involve the joints, heart and central nervous system, which can be disabling and difficult to treat.

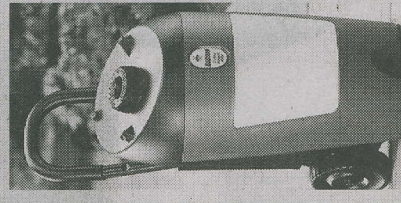
Bug prevention starts with awareness of your environment and wearing protective clothing, including hats, long-sleeve shirts and pants.

The main spray-on repellents on the market today include diethyl-metaltoluamide (DEET). The prevailing theory is that DEET effectively "blinds" the insect's senses so that the biting/feeding instinct is not triggered.

Some people have a sensitivity to DEET that manifests in the form of headaches and red, burning skin. The chemical can also be damaging to synthetic materials.

An alternative is picaridin. It's odorless, non-toxic, non-irritating and non-sticky.

Oil of lemon eucalyptus is a natural repellent with longer-lasting protection than other plant-based repellents such as citronella.



### ALLCLEAR Mosquito Mister

From \$300; [allclearmister.com](http://allclearmister.com)  
This portable, rechargeable, battery operated system can be moved and operated anywhere, anytime mosquitoes are a problem. One three minute mist application quickly kills and repels mosquitoes, gnats, no-see-ums and other small biting insects up to 4,000 square feet depending on model. Repels mosquitoes for as long as six hours with a choice of refillable repellent, including a plant-based solution safe around kids, pets and food.

— Erika Prafder