A Guide to Mosquitoes

The impact that mosquitoes have on humans is enormous. They are responsible for transmitting several diseases, including malaria, dengue, yellow fever, dog heart worm, West Nile Virus, Chikungunya, and Zika. In the Bay Area, West Nile Virus poses the greatest risk. In addition to the threat of disease, mosquitoes are a biting nuisance, and can cause unpleasant allergic reactions.

We provide mosquito related services to the City of Albany only. All other residents need to contact the Alameda County Mosquito Abatement District at (510) 783-7744.

Appearance

Mosquitoes have distinct immature and mature stages. The immature stages are found in water and are referred to as larvae and pupae. Larvae have thin wormlike bodies with a noticeable head, and range in size from 1/16" - 3/4", depending on age. They are commonly referred to as "wrigglers" because of the way they move through the water. Pupae have a comma-shape, and are referred to as "tumblers". ly are less than 1" in length.

Behavior

Immature mosquitoes are often seen at the water surface, and are sensitive to vibrations and sudden changes in light levels. They will quickly dive beneath the surface when disturbed. Most adult mosquito species are active at dawn and dusk, although there are some exceptions. Some of the more aggressive species will bite during the day in the shade. Other species are more nocturnal and prefer to bite at night.

Control

Mosquitoes are best controlled in the immature stages. In some cases, standing water where mosquitoes are found can simply be dumped and drained. In other cases, a direct application of insecticide to the water may be necessary. These materials are very specific to the mosquito's biology and have minimal environmental impact. One group is based on naturally occurring bacteria, and must be consumed by feeding larvae. Another group disrupts the hormonal balance of the larvae, and is absorbed through the mosquito body.