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Mosquitoes Are a Hazard to Your Pet's Health Too

By Scottie Johnson

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None of us likes to be bitten by mosquitoes and sometimes it is easy to forget that our pets suffer from mosquito bites too.

Mosquitoes feed on blood, and they will take it where they can find it. Only the female bites, the males feed on plant nectar. While the female may have preferred hosts, she must have protein from blood to produce eggs. And, one blood meal is often not enough to produce a clutch of eggs. Often the female will feed, rest to digest the meal and feed again up to three times before she can get enough protein to produce her eggs.

So, each time your pet is outside in mosquito territory, it is a sitting target for a hungry female mosquito that is eager to reproduce.

Many species of mosquitoes will choose birds over humans or pets, but they have even been known to feed on frogs and other reptiles, if that is what they can find for a blood meal.

Most responsible pet owners know of the hazards from mosquito bites associated with heartworm disease in cats and dogs. Mosquitoes carry parasite larvae, which they transmit to your pet once they bite. The parasite larvae then migrate to the heart and major circulatory organs in your pet, where it develops into an adult worm that can reach ten inches in length.

The problem with heartworms is that they can take many years to develop into an adult that can cause symptoms in your cat or dog. Dogs are usually more at risk than cats, simply because they are usually outdoors more often. By the time the symptoms develop, treatment is long and difficult. Sometimes the pet owner is unaware of the problem until the animal simply dies during exertion, a tragic ending that is very preventable.

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Protection against heartworms is as easy as a trip to your veterinarian. Many effective medicines, which are given orally, can prevent development of the larvae, if an infected mosquito bites your pet. The biggest failure of these medicines is pet owner default. They must be administered faithfully once per month with no lapse in treatment. And, just because it seems like mosquito season is at bay, don't lapse and forget to give your pet its dose. Many mosquitoes over-winter in protected places and they arouse ready to bite long before you might expect them.

Luckily, it is now possible to get a shot for your pet that will afford protection against heartworms for up to six months. Even diligent and caring pet owners can sometimes forget about the narrow window of opportunity for administering the oral medication. This new advancement spares you and your pet the risky aftermath of those lapses.

Now, pet owners have an even greater concern about mosquito bites to their pets. While rare, West Nile virus has been reported in both dogs and cats. There are very few reported cases of pet fatalities in dogs and cats, but the risk still exists. Instead, most of the time, the animal may test positive for the

virus, without having symptoms.

If your pet has West Nile virus, it may have the following symptoms: fever, depression or lethargy, muscle weakness or spasms, impaired coordination, seizures or paralysis. If your pet has these symptoms, consult your veterinarian immediately.

Bird and horse owners should be much more concerned. West Nile virus is primarily fatal to many bird species. Crows, for example, are very susceptible to fatal cases. Sparrows, on the other hand, easily contract it, but have no symptoms. And, migratory birds like sparrows help to continue the spread of the virus because they are highly mobile.

Of those birds that are kept as pets, parrots, cockateels and parakeets are most at risk. The risk factor is lower because they are seldom outside. If your home is well sealed and has good screens, these pets should be easily protected, if kept indoors.

Horse owners are now able to protect their horses with a very effective vaccine. Horses are particularly susceptible to mosquito borne viruses, and it is difficult to keep them away from outdoor exposure, even in barns and stalls. No such vaccine exists for smaller animals.

The same thing that protects you against mosquito diseases also protect your pets. Prevention!

Keep your home and yard mosquito free by being sure that mosquitoes don't have places to breed. Avoid allowing any water to stand in containers, like buckets, birdbaths, pet bowls, gutters, storm drains, and plant saucers. Many mosquitoes need only ¼ cup of water to breed.

The FDA has traditionally advised keeping your pet indoors around dawn and dusk, because that is when many mosquito species feed. That advice is no longer enough to protect your pet. The Asian tiger mosquito is an aggressive day biter. It was imported to the United States in 1985 and is now found in 30 states. It carries both West Nile virus and heartworm parasites.

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Instead, get rid of any possible breeding sites and also get a good pet insect repellent. Mosquito repellents made for humans are not to be used on pets. Never put any repellent on pets that is not DEET free. Instead get a repellent that is made for veterinary use and apply only according to directions. With your pets, you have to assume they may lick treated areas and you can't afford to take a chance that the repellent may be toxic to them.

For example, tea tree oil is a good natural mosquito repellent for humans, but it has proved fatal to some cats that have licked it off of their fur.

And, consider getting a propane powered mosquito trap to reduce mosquito populations in your yard. They are very effective, although expensive, but actually kill hundreds of mosquitoes if used according to the manufacturers directions. Over time these devices can actually decrease mosquito populations.

Mosquitoes are here to stay. Our best defense for our pets is to know how to avoid them, and how to keep our pets safe using the latest scientific advances. And, many of the things we do to protect our pets from mosquito borne diseases are good for us too.

Scottie Johnson is a life long mosquito warrior, free lance author and dog lover. For more information about having a mosquito free life, visit her site at

Water Garden Mosquitoes Problems

By Daniel Roshard

Water garden is one of the nicest things you can have in your garden or backyard, anyone that has planned adding a water garden to a house knows that this is not a simple task, there is a lot of thinking and planning to be done when considering this wonderful addition to the house.

As summer nears many water garden owners realize that there is a significant problem with some water gardens, this is a problem that is not evident and sometimes doesn't even show itself before the early days of the summer.

One major thing with any large body of water that is physically located in the vicinity of any house is the mosquitoes and diseases potential problems. Mosquitoes need water to live and breed, and this makes it very clear that as a water garden owner you will need to find solutions for this problem, mosquitoes can not only cause you real discomfort, they have the potential ability to transmit diseases, some of those diseases are extremely dangerous to humans.

The good thing is that by implementing a few, relatively simple tips you can prevent mosquitoes from breeding in your water garden and decrease the risk of disease significantly. One simple fact is that mosquitoes will only use a passive body of water to lay eggs and avoid laying eggs in running water, if you create a situation in which the water garden has constantly moving water the female mosquitoes will not be able to lay the eggs and you have stopped the problem before it has even begun.

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Using a device that will move the water around your water garden will not only help you fight the potential danger of mosquitoes, it is also recommended for general water quality and the overall performance of your water garden. Another thing you can use to fight mosquitoes is getting fish that eat these flying problem makers, in fact there are a few kinds of fish that are enemies of the mosquitoes, and therefore your friends.

Most water garden owners love having fish in their ponds and water, it is one very special aspect of having a water garden and if you have not tried having fish in your water garden yet this may be a good time to try and enjoy this aspect of water gardens, not only you will have a fish helping you fight mosquitoes you can also discover the joy of keeping fish pets.

Another, much more serious solution to the mosquitoes problem is B.t.i. Briquettes, these floating small floating two-inch rings contain bacillus thuringiensis, which is consumed by mosquito larvae and kills them, this is the professional and most efficient way to eliminate the risk of mosquitoes, and B.t.i has been used successfully in many cities in the world already, so this is the best scientific solution for a water garden risk of mosquitoes. The B.t.i. will not cause harm to fish or plants in your water garden so you have no reason to worry about the health of your water garden.

If nothing of the above advice is to your liking, you can always try and find a toad that will rule your water garden and feast on the mosquitoes, whatever you decide you should be aware of the danger in having mosquitoes breed in your backyard and you would do good to research as much as you on preventing this potential danger to you, your family members and neighbors.

Daniel Roshard is an interior designer that is enchanted by outdoors, gardening and landscaping.

Daniel is exploring integration of household appliances and features to outdoors, backyards and gardens. He recently discovered Water Gardens and is writing articles for

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