

# THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



## Department of Agricultural Resources

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## CONSUMER INFORMATION BULLETIN MOSQUITO AND TICK CONTROL

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### **Are commercial applications to mosquitoes and ticks safe?**

When pesticide applications are performed properly and carefully, the degree of risk is greatly reduced; however, all pesticides whether synthetic or organic are, by design, can pose some risk. Therefore, the use of pesticides must be used with caution. Toxicity can vary from one pesticide product to another, and individuals may be affected differently from the same level of exposure. Although there is usually minimal risk to people and pets, you should take steps to minimize your exposure to avoid potential problems.

### **Can I treat my own property for mosquitoes and ticks?**

Yes. Maintaining your own property for mosquito and ticks with pesticides can be accomplished if you follow the label carefully. However, it exposes you directly to the product during application. Improper and unsecured storage of pesticides around the home present additional hazards. If you decide to maintain your own property for mosquito and ticks, seek professional advice and carefully follow all the label directions including the timing, locations for treatment, application rate of the product, personal protective equipment, and frequency. Educate yourself to ensure you protect yourself and store the products safely.

### **Does someone treating property for mosquito and ticks need to be licensed?**

Yes. If a person is making a pesticide application with a pesticide that has been registered with the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on property that is not their own, then a pesticide license from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources ("Department") is required. To obtain the license an individual must take an exam and obtain continuing education units to maintain their license.

### **Can I minimize exposure to pesticide applications?**

Yes. To minimize exposure and the potential for health-related problems from pesticide applications, the Department recommends closing windows and removing all lawn furniture and toys from the yard. While the application should not drift onto any non-target areas, if you are concerned, you may want to wash down anything in the yard that you are unable to move. During and immediately after an application it is also important to keep other people, especially children and pets away from areas where pesticides are being applied. Wait until products have dried before entering the area.

### **How are mosquito/tick control products applied?**

Mosquito and tick applications can be performed by using a variety of application equipment to apply pesticides. The most common methods used by licensed applicators are a backpack motorized mist blower, which looks very similar to a leaf blower, handpump backpack sprayers, or hydraulic power sprayers (the type often used to spray trees and/or lawns). They may also apply granular products, which are applied either by hand or a hand spreader tool. Granular insecticides are commonly applied to the property's perimeter. Ticks often are found in leaf litter, so granular application in these areas offer a longer residual effect.

### **How does the applicator minimize exposure to pesticide applications?**

The applicator has many ways to minimize the drift/exposure of residents, including, but no limited to:

- Avoiding applications when it is windy or gusty to avoid drift.
- Looking around the property and any neighboring properties for sensitive items, like uncovered toys and lawn furniture, prior to the application.

- Ensuring that any windows are closed.
- Ensuring that pets are indoors.
- Spraying into the property to be treated from the perimeter to avoid spraying toward abutting properties.

**May I be notified by the company prior to the pesticide application?**

Yes. If you request to be notified before the application takes place, the Department recommends that the company do so. This notification would allow you time to prepare for the application(s). You can also use this notification to contact concerned neighbors.

**Am I required to notify my neighbor(s) that a company is applying pesticides to my property?**

The Department recommends that you notify your neighbor(s) but it is not required. Your neighbor(s) may wish to remove toy and lawn furniture during application and close their windows. They also may have concerns or questions regarding the application they can address with the applicator. In addition, the applicator may ask if they can stand on neighboring property and spray into your property to minimize drift into abutting properties.

**Why are my trees being treated for mosquitoes/ticks?**

Mosquito and tick applications may be applied to the tree/shrubs that line your property boundaries. The goal of these treatments is to kill mosquitoes/ticks that make contact with the foliage after the actual treatment is completed. This can increase the number of mosquitoes/ticks killed and the effective duration of the treatment.

**What if I have a question or a problem?**

The Department regulates the use of pesticides in Massachusetts. It is a violation of both federal and state law to use a pesticide inconsistent with the label directions. All commercial pesticide applicators must have a valid Pesticide Applicator License issued by the Department. Consumers should check to ensure that the applicator is licensed or certified. If you suspect that your applicator is unlicensed or a misuse has occurred, please contact the Department. If you have any further questions or concerns about pesticides or the application of pesticides, you should contact your tree/shrub company, or you can contact the following:

Massachusetts Pesticide Enforcement: (508)281-6785

EPA National Pesticide Information Center: (800) 858-7378

Massachusetts Poison Information Center: (617) 232-2120

Department of Public Health/Bureau of Environmental Health (617) 624-5757

If you have a contractual problem with a company, please contact the Massachusetts Attorney Generals' Office of Consumer Affairs at (617) 727-8400 or the Better Business Bureau at (617) 426-9000 and (413) 734-3114.

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