July, 2016 (Update)

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Protect Yourself from Summer Pests!

Love the summer weather? So do ticks, mosquitoes, yellow jackets, and other insects. Don't let these pests stop you from enjoying summertime! The following tips will help alleviate the pain of biting nuisances during the warm summer months.

Summertime welcomes barbecues, outdoor celebrations and picnics. Unfortunately, ground-nesting yellow jackets can interrupt outdoor meals; going after meat, fish and sugary beverages. Yellow jackets are foragers; they feed on insects, around garbage bins, picnic areas, and even right off the grill. They can be quite aggressive and often scavenge in large groups, making it difficult to get rid of them. Decrease the chances of yellow jackets by setting up your picnic area far from garbage cans, keeping your barbeque or picnic area clean and free of excess clutter, covering plates of food and drinks when not in use, and using lure traps if needed. If yellow jackets are in the area, make sure to check your food and drink before taking a bite.

Have a nest in your neighborhood? SCCvcd technicians can help with the removal of a yellow jacket nest in public areas. If you have a nest on your property, you can use lure traps easily found at home improvement stores to decrease wasp numbers or contact a private pest control company to destroy the nest.

Summer is also the season for nymphal ticks. Ticks here in Santa Clara County can transmit diseases like Lyme disease, Pacific Coast Tick Fever, and Tularemia to you and your pets. Before going out for a hike, apply repellent to skin or permethrin to clothing after reading the label. Permethrin repels and kills ticks, but cannot be applied to skin. After hiking or walking in a natural area, check yourself, your family, and your pets for ticks for several days. Nymphal ticks are very small (the size of a poppy seed) and can be easily overlooked. If possible, shower within two hours of returning home. This will wash off any unattached ticks and allow you to find any that have bitten you (are attached). An easy way to kill ticks is to put your clothes in the dryer on the hot cycle for at least 6 minutes. If you find a tick has bitten you, immediately remove it by pulling the tick straight out using constant pressure. If you feel sick or notice any strange rashes in the 30 days following your bite, tell your doctor you had been bitten by tick.

Finally, summertime is always prime season for mosquitoes. Have you ever had that annoying mosquito buzzing in your ear while you were trying to sleep at night? Some species of mosquitoes will enter, and potentially live in houses. Keep mosquitoes out of your home by making sure that screens and doors are free of holes and there are no cracks around windows. This is especially important in bathrooms and laundry rooms, since mosquitoes are attracted to water sources. Do not prop exterior doors open, and keep unscreened windows closed.

Mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus are active mostly at dusk and dawn. If you need to be out during these times wear long sleeves, long pants, and FDA-approved repellent such as DEET, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or picaridin. Look around your yard to make sure that you aren't breeding mosquitoes. Outdoor toys, rain barrels, pots and saucers, old tires, ornamental ponds, and neglected swimming pools can all be places that mosquitoes will lay eggs. Make sure you dump or drain standing water at least every two weeks. We have help for areas you can't dump or drain; neglected pools and ornamental ponds are perfect areas for our mosquitofish. A mosquitofish can eat hundreds of baby mosquitoes in a day. Call (408-918-4770), email (Vectorinfo@cep.sccgov.org), or visit our website (www.sccvector.org/service) if you notice mosquitoes breeding anywhere in the county; we will inspect the area, work with you or the property owner to identify long term problems, and potentially treat the area.

Enjoy your time outdoors but keep in mind what might be waiting out there for you. Repellents, source reduction, and knowledge are key to preventing vector borne diseases. Always read the label before purchasing a repellent; not all repellents are for everyone. Use this interactive EPA website to find the repellent that is right for you: https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you. Vector Control wishes you a safe and healthy summer!

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## Keep Zika Virus Out of Santa Clara County

Zika virus (Zika) has been making headlines due to increased detections in neighboring states and countries. The virus is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito, and can cause birth defects, including microcephaly. To date, 77 confirmed human cases of Zika have been reported in California; all were travelers that acquired the virus in another country. Zika-carrying mosquitoes do not currently exist in Santa Clara County. However, the rate at which these mosquito species are spreading suggests that they may be a threat to our community in the future. While only imported cases of Zika have been reported in Santa Clara County, the Vector Control District is working hard to keep the mosquito species known to carry Zika out of our County.

**The Santa Clara County Vector Control District´s (VCD) Works to Keep Invasive Mosquitoes from Calling Our County Home**

Research indicates that mosquitoes of the *Aedes* species have the ability to carry and transmit Zika. Container-breeding *Aedes* mosquitoes are non-native to Santa Clara County, and are hard to control because they need only a bottle cap of water to lay eggs. The VCD's surveillance program prevents the establishment of non-native mosquitoes through trapping, and source elimination (treating). Continuous monitoring and study of these trap sites has helped the VCD to identify invasions before they escalate. Two invasions of a particularly aggressive species, *Aedes albopictus* (A.K.A., Asian Tiger Mosquito), have been eradicated in our County; one in Mountain View in 2003 and another in Gilroy in 2001.

**How bad is the disease?**

Zika is generally considered a mild virus with few complications in healthy adults. A few days after infection by mosquito bite, the person may start to feel symptoms. Symptoms may include fever, skin rashes, eye irritation, muscle and joint pain, body aches, and headache. These symptoms are usually mild and last for 2-7 days. In severe cases, Zika affects the nerves and brain, which can have a significant impact on the brain development of fetuses (A.K.A. microcephaly). Additionally, in some adults, Zika can cause the Guillain-Barré syndrome. This syndrome consists of chronic muscle weakness, which, in severe cases, can affect breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure.

Since there is currently no specific treatment or vaccine available; preventing mosquito bites is the best way to stay safe.

**Prevention is the Main Cure**

Protection against mosquito bites is critical to prevent Zika and other diseases like West Nile virus (WNV). Use the following measures to decrease the risk of being bitten by:

Outside:

* Wear light colored, long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

* Use FDA-approved insect repellents with DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or para-menthane-diol.

**At Home:**

* Check your door and window screens for holes that mosquitoes can use to enter your house

* Dump or drain all standing water in your backyard weekly.

* **Check your home and yard for possible breeding sources**, including tree holes, unused barbeques, ponds, toys, tires, and pots and their saucers. All of these sources create breeding grounds for mosquitoes

* **Report sources of mosquito breeding** such as neglected pools to the Vector Control District – our service technicians can inspect the potential source and treat it if it's deemed to be producing mosquitoes.

* **Report day-biting mosquitoes** to the Vector Control District. Day biting mosquitoes are of particular concern to the VCD. Two species of day biting mosquitoes (*Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*) have been established in parts of California, and the VCD is working hard to keep them out of our County.

The VCD's Education Program continuously reaches out to county residents about invasive mosquito species, the diseases they can transmit, and how to prevent and control them. Interested in having a VCD Education and Outreach professional speak at your community event? Contact us to schedule a free education session. Additionally, if you are being bitten during the day, the VCD provides free inspections to investigate and potentially treat breeding sources. To schedule an inspection, report a mosquito source, or book an educational presentation, please contact us at (408) 918-4770, at www.SCCvector.org/service, or download our app at SCCvector/app.

## All About Bee Swarms

Honey bee swarms are most frequently seen during the spring season particularly following the first 4-5 days of warm and mild weather. The appearance of a large clump of bees hanging from a branch (see photo) or other structure may strike fear or intrigue into the onlooker. Luckily, bee swarms are quite docile if left undisturbed.

Bee swarms are how a new bee colony is formed. Swarms most often occur when the queen of a colony leaves her original hive with a large group of worker bees. The new swarm will develop away from the parent hive, resulting in a cluster of bees ranging from the size of a grapefruit, to up to a foot in length (about 1-5 pounds in weight). During this process, approximately 60% of the worker bees will leave the original hive and become part of the new swarm.

The District routinely receives calls from residents reporting a swarm in their neighborhood or on their property. In many cases the swarm will move on to a new location within 2-3 days, once forager bees have scouted out an area for potential hive sites. The forager bees use a waggle-dance communication behavior to convey the quality and location of potential hive sites to the other bees clustered in the swarm, until a “consensus” is reached by the entire swarm. Before flying off to their new site the bees must warm up their bodies to the proper temperature.

Beekeeping using European honey bees is conducted throughout the urban, suburban and rural zones in Santa Clara County. While beekeeping in residential areas provides an important pollinator service to the public, the production of swarms and ensuing removal of feral bees from structures can be an expensive ordeal. Bees are known to colonize wall voids, attic spaces, and chimneys and even water meter boxes. Abatement of larger feral hive infestations requires removal of bees, honey and wax, the last two of which can melt and seep within the structure causing further damage.

If you notice a bee swarm or nest in a public area or your bees are acting aggressively please give us a call at 408-918-4770.