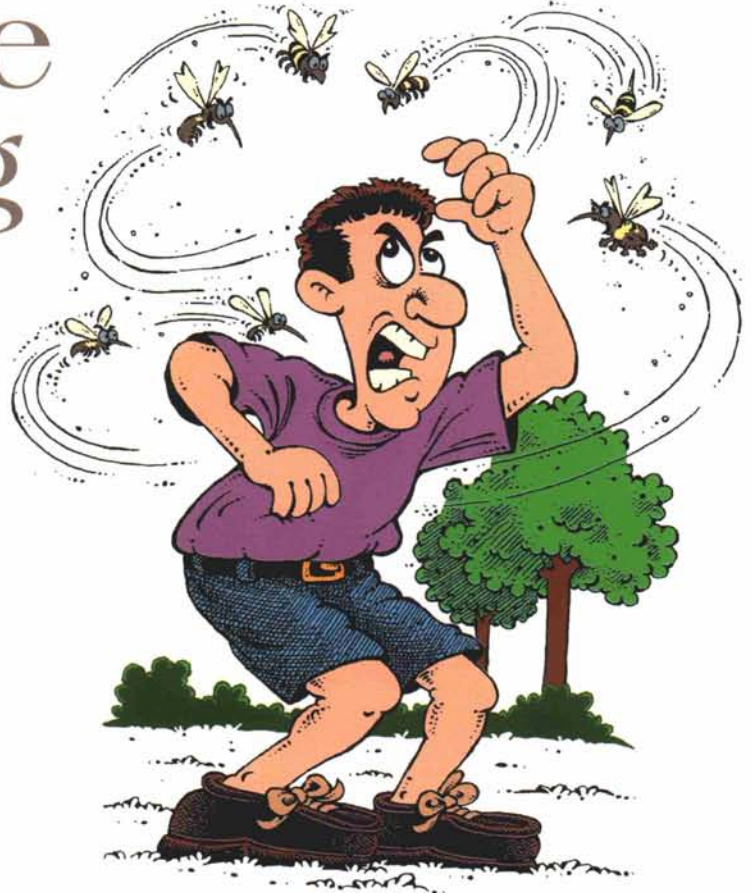


Battling the Marauding Mosquito

Ah, early mornings on the links: that slightly cool, just barely moist air welcomes you as the sun begins to creep over the horizon. As you prepare for your day, the birds twitter, the mowers in the distance hum their dull roar and the sprinklers twitch on your perfect turf. And then—the slap of a hand on the back of a neck, curses from the golfers and the horrifying hiss of aerosol DEET torching your tee box. Your pleasant, zen-like morning has turned into another chapter in man's battle with the mosquito.



Like sand traps and water hazards, mosquitoes are often just another nuisance on the course: irritating distractions for the players, and headaches for those focused on customer satisfaction.

"When mosquitoes are bad on the course—we hear about it," says Tim Davis, superintendent of Shoreacres in Lake Bluff.

But nuisance mosquito control goes beyond keeping golfers from being annoyed—a regular program of mosquito control can actually save money in the long run.

Barrier, Not Burnout

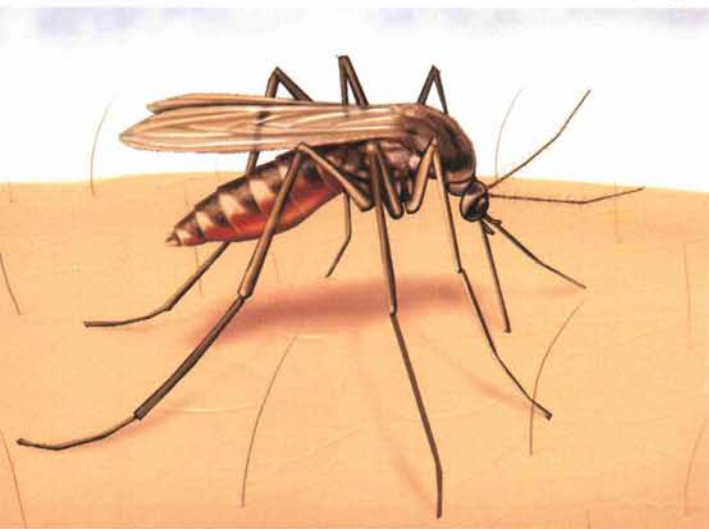
One of the telltale signs of mosquito season is the slightly burned-out patch of turf at the tees. Golfers often douse themselves with a spritz of DEET-based repellent after a few bites. Unfortunately, aerosol-based personal protection is tough on grass, creating brown patches from the propellant ingredients in the spray.

"We joke that you can tell a golfer's shoe size after he sprays himself for mosquitoes," says Davis. "We provide DEET wipes for golfers in our pro shop, and tell the clubhouse staff not to stock the aerosol cans."

Barrier treatments can be effective spot treatments in areas most commonly afflicted with turf damage from personal mosquito protection. Barrier treatment is a water-based product that kills mosquitoes and repels them for up to 10 days.

While the rough is treacherous for errant golfers, it also harbors another threat: mosquitoes. Many mosquito species enjoy the cool habitat of shady thickets and bracken during the day, then emerge in cooler evening or early

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morning weather for a blood meal.

Barrier treatments involve spraying a low-volume mist to kill adult mosquitoes where they harbor. "Barrier treatments are also important to keep the staff safe," notes Davis. "When the crew is tending to wooded areas, they're likely to get bitten from the mosquitoes hiding there in the heat of the day."

Barrier treatments are often the "ounce of prevention" that prevents complaints at the 19th hole.

ATV Treatment for Overall Enjoyment

A beautiful day on a challenging course sounds like the perfect way to spend a morning. But the whole experience can be ruined by something no bigger than a pencil eraser. If a golfer spends his entire day on the links swatting and scratching, the outing becomes a disaster, for the player as well as his score. When mosquitoes get to such a population that they're annoying to golfers all over the course, ATV spraying can reduce the mosquito density and distribution on the entire grounds. ATV spraying involves an ultra-low-volume mist distributed by machines mounted to all-terrain vehicles, which can quickly and efficiently distribute mosquito-control products without damaging the course.

"You spend the whole year doing everything you can to make the course challenging, beautiful and a great experience for guests," says Dave O'Hara, vice president and grounds and greens chairman at Elgin Country Club. "And there's nothing worse than having them be miserable when mosquitoes get unbearable. ATV treatments let you control when you need to really cut down on mosquitoes throughout the course."

Mosquito Control as Profit Center

Offering a mosquito-control treatment as part of weddings, parties and other special event contracts can create a new profit center for the facility. What bride wants to throw her bouquet under a tent housing hungry mosquitoes? Or worse, when no one enjoys their experience at membership recruiting nights, compromising future revenues.

"For special events like our Ravinia nights, mosquito control is key," comments O'Hara. "Special events are often held at dusk in summer—when mosquitoes are out in force. We want to show off our course at night, and to do that, it has to be a positive experience, not one where they're being bitten right and left."

Many courses offer mosquito-control treatments as part of special event rental packages—a nominal fee to treat the area immediately prior to weddings, picnics, etc. This can also be a modest source of income for the course with a small service fee included.

Getting Started with a Mosquito-Control Program

While a full integrated pest management program featuring larviciding and adult control can certainly reduce the risks of West Nile virus for golfers, crew and guests, small inroads can be made to tackle the challenge of mosquitoes without breaking the operations budget wide open.

Considering larvicide for areas like water hazards, slow-draining areas, parking lot catchbasins and marshlands with heavy vegetation or any area where water may stand stagnant for more than four days is an effective method of source reduction, stopping mosquitoes before they grow to adulthood.

Working with a mosquito professional can help you establish a plan of action to reduce mosquitoes throughout the year, making a round of golf on your course a more enjoyable—and safer—experience.



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