

5 Steps to Stop the Spraying

You just found out your community is being sprayed by hazardous pesticides for mosquito control. You want to do something. Where do you begin? Follow these 5 steps and you will be on the way to getting a safer, more effective and sustainable approach to mosquito management implemented in your community.

1 Learn About the Spraying. As a first step, find out the basic details of the spray program: Who, what, when, where, why and how. Who is spraying? Is it the department of health or agriculture, or an abatement district? Who orders the spraying - the city, the county or the mayor? Who makes the decisions - the department of health or a board of supervisors? Why are they spraying? What criteria are being used that would trigger the spraying of adulticides (pesticides used for adult mosquitoes)? Is there a schedule of exactly when and where the spraying will take place? How is the agency informing you and your community of spraying activity? Is there a list of people who choose not to be sprayed (an opt-out list)?

2 Know the Pesticides. The second step involves the actual chemicals being used. Which adulticide is being used? You may be given either the name of the product or the active ingredient. For example, Anvil 10+10 is a product, sumithrin is the active ingredient. Look up the chemical on the internet or call a local pesticide organization or Beyond Pesticides. Next, learn the basic points of the chemical's toxicity and its known and unknown effects on human health and the environment.

3 Research Alternatives. If your local government is dependent on chemical mosquito control, you will need to offer them effective alternatives. Effective mosquito management alternatives are easy to learn, such as reducing breeding areas, focusing on larval control, and taking simple measures to avoid biting mosquitoes. Pay particular attention to what alternatives might be most needed in your community. Use the models of other communities that practice effective mosquito management techniques to battle mosquitoes without the use of adulticides.

4 Gather Support. Working with others is critical to success. Contact local environmental or pesticide groups. Talk to your friends and neighbors or local co-ops that might support you. Try also cancer groups, asthma groups, PTAs, homeowner groups, organic farm-

ers, fishing and beekeeper associations, and neighborhood coalitions. Contact local professionals, such as doctors and university professors, and find out their views on mosquito spraying.

5 Present Your Case. After you have gathered a base of support, you are ready to start getting your message out. Here are some ideas that have worked for others:

- Start an e-mail listserve with those who are equally concerned.
- Put up posters and hand out flyers in local gathering places to inform community members about the spraying and the dangers related to it.
- Gather signatures from local residents who do not want their property sprayed.
- Gather expert signatures and allies from concerned professionals in the local medical community or university.
- Write a position statement with others in your community.
- Contact the media to publicize your message by writing letters to the editor, opinion editorials, or meeting with the editorial board of your local news source.
- Organize a public forum with key guest speakers or request a public hearing to openly discuss your community's options for mosquito management with decision makers.

This information was adapted from a more detailed version of *5 Steps to Stop the Spraying*. For a wealth of practical tools and resources to help you stop the spraying in your community and for more details on how to present your case, visit the Beyond Pesticides website: www.beyondpesticides.org/mosquito or contact us at 202-543-5450.