

Mosquitoes and Dog Heartworm



The Western Treehole Mosquito

Aedes sierrensis, the western treehole mosquito, frequently lays its eggs in the water-filled cavities of trees such as oak, laurel, madrone, and eucalyptus. They may also breed in other standing water, such as containers and roof gutters.

Western treehole mosquitoes bite aggressively during the day and are most common between March and August in areas where many trees are present. They often feed outdoors, but may enter homes.

Mosquito Prevention

Like all mosquitoes, the western treehole mosquito needs standing water to lay its eggs. Most western treehole mosquitoes will hatch from water-filled cavities in tree trunks. These cavities can be filled with sand or cement, or you may choose to consult a tree surgeon about eliminating tree cavities on your property.

Although this mosquito species prefers tree cavities, it may reproduce in other available areas of standing water as well. The best way to prevent the western treehole mosquito, as well as other mosquitoes, is by eliminating standing water where mosquito eggs, larvae, and pupae are found, including:

- Turn over, cover, or dispose of small containers
- Screen/cover rain barrels or other water collection devices
- Inspect and repair sump pumps
- Stock ponds, fountains, water troughs, and unused pools with mosquito fish
- Change water in birdbaths and pet bowls weekly
- Keep gutters clear of leaves and debris
- Repair leaks that create standing water
- Avoid over-watering lawns and gardens



Dog Heartworm

Dog heartworm is an illness caused by the parasite *Dirofilaria immitis*. This parasite is transmitted from one host to another through the bite of the western treehole mosquito. If untreated, the parasites move through the dog's bloodstream, eventually blocking blood flow and causing damage to the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys.

Symptoms of dog heartworm in dogs include rapid tiring, shortness of breath, chronic dry cough, listlessness, and weight loss. Dog heartworm can be treated if diagnosed early, but is frequently fatal if left untreated.

Although dog heartworm does not infect humans, it can cause illness and death in coyotes and foxes. Cats are rarely infested with dog heartworm.

Heartworm Prevention

Talk to your veterinarian about heartworm prevention for your dog. Heartworm preventative medication is available under a variety of product names and is typically administered monthly at home. These products are available by prescription from your veterinarian. All dogs should be tested for heartworm infestation before beginning treatment to avoid potentially fatal complications.

Although the mosquitoes that transmit dog heartworm are most active in the summer, they are sometimes present at other times of year. Most veterinarians recommend year-round heartworm prevention for dogs in the Bay Area.



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Protect Yourself from Mosquito Bites

Dress properly: keep your skin covered by wearing long sleeves and pants when outdoors. Choose loose-fitting clothing; mosquitoes may be able to bite through tight-fitting garments.

Use insect repellent: look for products containing DEET, Picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Always apply repellent according to the label directions.

Keep mosquitoes out: ensure that door and window screens fit tightly and are in good condition. Repair screens as needed. Avoid leaving doors and windows open.

Avoid areas where mosquitoes are biting: unlike many mosquito species, western treehole mosquitoes bite most aggressively during the daytime, and are often found in areas with many trees.

Stay aware: educate yourself about mosquito-borne diseases that may affect you or your pet, and seek medical attention if you believe you or your pet may have a mosquito-borne disease.

San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District

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Monday-Friday
8a.m. to 4:30p.m.

www.smcmvcd.org