

# Myths About West Nile Virus and Pesticides

Information compiled by Pesticide Alternatives and Stop West Nile Spraying Now

## **Myth #1: The pesticide Evergreen 60-6 is “safe.”**

**Fact:** It is against federal law for pesticide applicators to claim that a pesticide is “safe.” Evergreen 60-6 consists of 6% pyrethrin, 60% piperonyl butoxide, and 34% unknown. PBO is listed by the EPA as a Group C carcinogen. The remaining 34% are only listed as “other ingredients.” However, “other” or “inert” ingredients are not inert in the usual sense of the word; often they are neither chemically, biologically, nor toxicologically inert (NCAP).

## **Myth #2: West Nile Virus (WNV) is an “epidemic.”**

**Fact:** There is no human epidemic of West Nile Virus. The numbers are clear.

- Total human WNV-related fatalities in all of California in 2011 – 9.
- Total human WNV-related fatalities in all of California in 2010 – 6.
- Total human WNV-related fatalities in all of California in 2009 – 4.
- Total human WNV-related fatalities in all of California in 2008 – 15.
- Total human WNV-related fatalities in all of California in 2007 – 21.
- Total human WNV-related fatalities in all of California in 2006 – 7.
- Total human WNV-related fatalities in all of California in 2005 – 19.
- Total human WNV-related fatalities in all of California in 2004 – 29.
- Human deaths from influenza and pneumonia in California in a given year – over 7,000.

## **Myth #3: Spraying pesticides will prevent WNV infections and save lives.**

**Fact:** There is no evidence that shows that the spraying of pesticides in any way impacts the number of WNV infections. In fact, it may increase your risk of contracting West Nile virus.

- Pesticides suppress the immune system, making it harder to fight off WNV infection.
- Pesticides also kill the natural mosquito predators, who have a much longer recovery period.
- Mosquitoes quickly evolve, becoming immune to the pesticide (as happened with malathion).
- Mosquitoes sprayed with pesticide can become more aggressive and bite more before they die.
- Pesticide spraying gives the public a false sense of security and decreases participation in methods that work.
- “In general WNV is a mild disease. It only becomes serious encephalitis if the virus can cross the blood-brain barrier. Among the agents that impair the blood-brain barrier in young rats are pyrethroid, organophosphate, and organochlorine pesticides. Thus, insecticide spraying has the potential to worsen the process of WNV infection.” – *Dr. Dennis Goode, Department of Biology, University of Maryland.*

## **Myth #4: Those who oppose pesticide spraying care more about their organic gardens than human lives.**

**Fact:** Every death is a tragedy. Those who are working to stop the spraying of pesticides come from all walks of life and include doctors, scientists, lawyers, professionals, teachers, business owners, farmers, concerned parents and many more educated citizens who are concerned about the immediate (for part of the population) and cumulative (for the entire population) health risks of repeated pesticide exposure.

## **Myth #5: One round of spraying will solve the problem (of WNV).**

**Fact:** Each round of spraying only kills adult mosquitoes at an average efficacy rate of at best 40% (for caged mosquitoes). In 10 days or less, a new round of mosquitoes is born, forcing more and more rounds of pesticide spraying. As noted above, there is no evidence that spraying pesticides works to combat WNV infection rates.

**FACT: There are BETTER WAYS TO CONTROL MOSQUITOES that do not expose you to pesticides. Even SYMVCD admits that these are the preferred methods:**



- **Property Management** (Draining mosquito breeding grounds).
- **Larva Eating Fish**
- **Natural Larvicides**
- **Beneficial Insects** (dragonflies, damselflies, etc.)
- **Bats, Toads, Birds, Lizards** (and other natural mosquito predators)

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