

# TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS



## **C. Roxanne Connelly, BS, MS, PhD**

Associate Professor, Medical Entomology Extension Specialist  
Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory  
UF/IFAS Department of Entomology & Nematology  
E-mail: [crr@ufl.edu](mailto:crr@ufl.edu)

## **Mosquito Season Preparation 101**

Mosquito control is already underway in many regions across the U.S. As early as March, there were reports of West Nile virus in sentinel animals, the first human case of West Nile in Arizona, and several horse cases of EEE in Central Florida. However, in many regions, the cold weather is still present and mosquitoes are not yet active. Either way, this spring is a good time to prepare for the mosquito season so that you aren't caught with a low chemical inventory or dead batteries when you need them the most. Take some time to consider the following pre-season check list to make sure your transition into the busy part of the mosquito season is a well-prepared transition.

### **Employees**

**Preseason training:** Train new employees and re-train the regular staff in the areas of new products, new technologies, and procedures.  
**Information:** Make sure you locate all the "new" labels for all the products that you are using. There were changes in many labels over the last year. It's up to you to have the most current information. Pay particular attention to the section on the labels for PPE.  
**Communicating with the public:** Remind all employees of their role when they encounter the inquisitive public. Provide your staff with informational brochures with contact information that they can leave with clients.  
**First aid kits:** Make sure you go through your first aid kits and replenish supplies that may have been used during the previous year.  
**Repellent for workers:** For those employees who are not conducting landing counts, make sure they have insect repellents in their toolbox. If you have an employee who has never used a repellent, have them test for sensitivity first on a small patch of skin. If they experience a rash or skin irritation, try a product with a lower percentage of the active ingredient, or a different active ingredient.  
Check with all field workers for special needs such as Epi pens, sting kits, and other medical concerns.

### **Equipment**

**Batteries:** Check batteries in all field equipment that require them, including aspirators, light traps, flashlights, radios, cell phones.  
**Insect Traps:** Clean all the insect traps and check your inventory of CO<sub>2</sub>. Look for breaks in the covers and fans, tears in the collection bags, and check the electrical connections.  
**Communication Systems:** Take a fresh look at your communication plan. Are you using the best technology matched to your program needs? As well as checking the batteries and chargers, look for worn connectors or electrical shorts that might rob you of the ability to communicate with your employees in the field.  
**Equipment Checklists:** Use the manufacturers' recommended checklists for equipment including vehicles, sprayers, larviciding rigs, foggers, etc. Make sure that everyone who uses the equipment knows how important it is to maintain it correctly.  
**Pesticide Stewardship:** In your pesticide storage area, make sure that all MSDS sheets are readily available. Check the integrity and the security of the area to make sure the supplies are properly secured. Rotate your stock so that the oldest materials are used first. If your materials are stored in unheated space, make sure you know what impact this has (if any) and that you work to make sure the material is ready to be used. If you have any questions, contact the manufacturer.

### **MOST IMPORTANTLY**

The most important thing at this time of the year is to make sure that everyone in your group is current and up to speed on the latest developments. In a few weeks time, your folks will be going in a lot of different directions. Shortly after you get up and running, you may be taking on temporary workers and summer help. Make sure that your core group knows the mission and how to perform safely and effectively, and can accurately train and convey this information to others.