The mosquito population has steadily increased due to early summer rains and homeowners should take precautionary measures to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Homeowners can drastically reduce their risk to mosquito exposure by practicing a few tried and true rules. To avoid being bitten by mosquitoes remember “the Five D’s”:

Avoid being outside during Dusk and Dawn hours

Dress appropriately so that your skin is covered when you are outside

Use a repellent that contains Deet

Check to make sure your yard has proper Drainage

Home owners can reduce the number of mosquitoes by eliminating mosquito breeding sites. Mosquitoes only need a few days to turn standing water into a hatchery. Any container that catches rain water, irrigation water or water that runs off a roof needs to be turned over or covered so that it will not collect water. Rain barrels, piles of aluminum cans and trays underneath outdoor plants fall into this category. Some containers such as tires collect water no matter how they lay on the ground. These types of containers need to be punctured at the lowest point so that all the water runs through them.

Your landscape can also be a home for mosquitoes. Certain plants, like bromeliads, have leaves that trap water where mosquitoes will breed. Plants also provide a place where adult mosquitoes can hide because the dense foliage shields them from drying out and dying. Many mosquitoes have frail, soft bodies that cannot tolerate arid conditions for long. That is why mosquitoes are more active during the dusk and dawn hours!

Recent heavy rains have flooded pastures and woodlands, causing many species of mosquitoes to multiply. One of the most notable and largest species of mosquitoes is called the “Gallinipper”; it is rumored that it drinks a gallon with every bite. These large mosquitoes lay their eggs in dried cracks in the soil and then emerge after a large flooding event, like a hurricane, which triggers the eggs to hatch and begin the larval stage development. It takes several days for the larvae to turn into adults, which is why we are seeing so many mosquitoes at this time. Floodwater pools that are exposed to sunlight are the preferred nesting sites for this giant mosquito. Bradford County has many acres of cutover timberland and roadside ditches which hold standing water and provide ideal nesting habitat for these and other kinds of mosquitoes.

Bradford County Mosquito Control personnel have been working overtime to help manage the mosquito population. One problem with spraying adult mosquitoes is that only the adults that are sprayed are controlled at a given time. Mosquitoes that hatch out in the following two or three days also need to be sprayed. In reality, it is impossible to spray all the areas that need spraying as often as it is needed. Call 904-368-3971 to report high levels of mosquitoes.

Don’t forget the 5 D’s: DUSK, DAWN, DRESS, DEET and DRAINAGE.

May 23, 2013 Mosquito Alert by Jim DeValerio, Bradford County Extension

Call Jim DeValerio at 904-966-6299 for Information regarding The Buzz Busters