

Bird Feeders and Caged Birds

Bird feeders don't attract vector insects, but spilled or improperly stored seed can attract vertebrate vectors such as rats, opossums, and raccoons, which may carry fleas and ticks. Clean spilled seed from the area beneath feeders at least twice a week to discourage nuisance animals.

If you keep birds in an outdoor cage, clean up their food and waste at least weekly. If possible, cover the cage from dusk to dawn to prevent mosquitoes from feeding on the birds while they sleep.

For more tips regarding bird feeders, see the document by USGS at: http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/fact_sheets/coping_with_diseases_at_birdfeeders.jsp



Pet Food and Waste

Store pet food indoors. If you must feed your pets outdoors, bring their food and water inside at night. Clean up spilled food daily.

Filth flies and biting stable flies feed and breed in animal waste. Clean up pet waste daily to discourage flies from reproducing in your yard.



Vectors are animals that can transfer microscopic bacteria or viruses (pathogens) or cause discomfort to humans. The Orange County Vector Control District is a designated special district serving all of Orange County. The District is involved in controlling vectors such as rats, mosquitoes, biting flies, and fire ants, and monitoring disease occurrence in rats and other small mammals throughout the County.



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Disease Safety for Outdoor Enthusiasts

Americans enjoy many types of outdoor activities. Whether you enjoy walking, hiking, riding, fishing, nature-watching, photographing, gardening, or outdoor sporting events, you should learn how to protect yourself from diseases spread by wild animals. Some types of animals can transfer (vector) microscopic bacteria or viruses (pathogens) that cause disease during or after they feed on your blood. Vector-borne diseases known from Orange County include Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease, West Nile virus, and flea-borne typhus. Local blood-sucking vector species include ticks, fleas, and mosquitoes. Some insects, such as bottle flies and house flies (together called filth flies), crawl over and feed on animal waste and pick up bacteria, which they spread on the next thing they walk over, including you and your food. Biting stable flies breed in animal waste; when adults, they inflict a painful bite that draws blood. You can take some fairly simple steps to discourage vectors and nuisance insects.

General Outdoor Precautions



- When walking, hiking, or riding off-pavement, stay in the center of trails to avoid ticks that may be on overhanging vegetation, waiting for their next meal to walk by.
- Stay away from sick or injured wild animals. They may be infested with blood-sucking vector species that need a new host and could attack you.
- Wear clothing that hides as much skin as possible: covered shoes, socks, long pants, long-sleeved shirt or jacket, and a hat.
- Ticks and fleas crawl upward. If your pants are over your socks or your shirt is over your pants, they can crawl upward, under the overlapping garment, and easily get to your skin. Keep them on the outside of your clothing where they can be seen and removed. Tuck your pants into your socks (or wear outdoor gators/leggings) and tuck your shirt into your pants.
- If accompanied by a dog or a horse, be sure to keep it on anti-flea and anti-tick medication. Comb its fur to look for hitchhikers.
- Every hour or so, check yourself, your dog, and your horse for ticks and fleas.
- Wear an approved insect repellent that contains an active ingredient such as DEET, Picaridin, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus, pyrethroids (pyrethrum, allethrin, permethrin), or IR3535 (alanine, beta-alanine). They are available as lotions, sprays, aerosols, and wipes.



Repellent Notes

Never spray a repellent directly into your face. Spray it into your hands, spread it slowly, and keep it out of your eyes. Some are not recommended for use on very young children. Some can be used on skin but not on clothing; others are the reverse. Read and follow all label directions carefully and thoroughly.

DEET is very effective, however it can permanently damage some rubber, plastic, synthetic, and vinyl materials. Even binoculars, cameras, lenses, and paints can be affected. Keep DEET away from those materials. If you use DEET, clean your hands before handling sensitive items.

For assistance selecting a repellent, see the document by Centers for Disease Control, http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/resources/08_118867_repellent_timeline_8%205X11.pdf



Bird Baths, Ponds, and Fountains

Birds and insects use bird baths, ponds, and fountains to drink water and bathe. However, mosquitoes use that water to reproduce.

Adult females are attracted to it, lay eggs on or near it, and their young stages live in it. The young can even live in very small amounts of standing water such as that found in drainers under potted plants. Eliminate sources of standing water by dumping out excess water from drainers, buckets, and debris.

Female mosquitoes won't lay eggs if the water is sprayed or in motion. Keep water moving with an active dripper, wiggler, spout, or other device. Keep bird baths fresh by draining and cleaning them once or twice weekly. Small ponds and fountains should be treated with a mosquito control agent (such as Bti) that affects only mosquitoes but is non-toxic to other animals. Mosquito fish can be added to larger ponds and fountains.

