

Aerial Spraying Q&A

With Laura McGowan, Clarke Spokesperson

(Clarke will conduct the aerial spraying for Dallas County)

Q: What is in the spray?

A: Synthetic pyrethroids. These are the synthetic versions of something that occurs naturally in a Chrysanthemum plant.

"They've been used for about 30 years. And there's lots of good research that says they have very good efficacy and very little impact to humans and the environment."

Q: How does it work?

A: "The nice thing about the product that we're using by air is that it has an agent in it that excites the mosquitos. We call it benign agitation. And what it does is it gets them kind of worked up into frenzy. They think something exciting is happening. So more of them are flushed out of the brush and overhangs and things like that. The product works when it comes into contact with the mosquitoes. So we're maximizing the opportunity for that to happen. And there's no impact to anybody's car finish, or home, or anything like that. It all breaks down in the environment very, very quickly. And it does not bio-accumulate, which means it does not collect in the environment."

Q: How much product is actually used?

A: "People need to understand that this is a very small amount of product. About 2 tablespoons of active ingredient will treat an entire acre. So these are extremely small droplets. And extremely small amount of active ingredients being used. It's in the same class of product that's being used here on the ground. They're both synthetic pyrethroids. But the nice thing about aerial application is that we have an opportunity to really impact the transmission cycle."

Q: The label says there are no re-entry precautions. What does that mean?

A: "There's no restrictions on what you can do or whether you can even be outside during the application. The nice thing is it burns off in the environment quickly in the sunlight. There's no bio-accumulation which means it doesn't collect in the environment either. A lot of these products that use on your pets for flea & tick collars or if you have a lice treatment for your children – you're putting these same kinds of products in much, much higher concentrations directly on to your pets and children."

Q: What if one city wants spraying, but its neighbor doesn't? How does the spray discriminate? And how do you insure too much product isn't used?

A: "We actually have very sophisticated technology on the planes. The technology automatically adjusts for the area we're applying. Wind speed. Altitude. Dispersion rate. All those kinds of things. This is a very precise science. We actually measure out the droplets we use so they're exactly the size to interact with mosquitos and nothing else. So we will be testing and calibrating and characterizing the aircraft to be used so that we've insured that what's going to happen is the areas that need to be sprayed are sprayed and the areas that are not, won't be."

Q: What happens to late night hot spots - people sitting on patios at night?

A: "Most people won't even notice that the spraying is taking place. The planes are extremely quiet. They're flying at about the height of a 30-story building. It's very much something that happens in the background. People don't need to be alarmed. There's been documented evidence that it doesn't pose any significant risk to humans and the environment."

Q: How often do they spray?

A: "We are pretty much doing things every single day during mosquito season. Down in Florida, it's almost a nightly occurrence. And in other areas, like I said, we were just in Boston helping them with their Eastern Equine Encephalitis outbreak. And that's the third time we've done our applications by air there in the last five or six years. So we actually work internationally where we've done some things down in Africa, India... all over the world."