How long have you been on the job, and were you a mosquito expert before that?

I have been Lancaster and Lebanon's Mosquito-borne Disease Control Program coordinator for two years. I was by no means a mosquito expert prior to that, but I received comprehensive training by the folks at Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, who we work with closely on the project. I have an undergraduate degree in animal science, which is biology based, and I have found that to be very useful.

Last year was a record-breaking year for mosquitoes and West Nile Virus. What did you learn and will it change your approach this year?

Last year was difficult. I learned that a fast-moving train is difficult to stop, so start early ... earlier than you would think you need to! I hope to hit the prolific breeding areas early this year, and stop that train before it gets moving.

Is this considered your off-season? What does your job entail over the winter months when mosquitoes should be dormant?

I get this question a lot! Yes, it is definitely my off-season. I spend my time repairing equipment, making educational materials, planning events like tire collections, meeting with municipalities or residents, and otherwise preparing for the upcoming season.

What is the most difficult or unpleasant part of your job? Do you get bitten a lot?

I believe the most difficult part of my job is when I get notification of a human West Nile Virus infection. My goal is always to have zero human infections in the county, but unfortunately that is not always the case. I would imagine that I could compare that feeling to when a doctor would lose a patient. In regards to getting bitten, it only happens when in particularly problematic areas (usually those places with a lot of tires). For the most part, the mosquitoes we are after are only out around dusk and not during work hours. This is good for us, as we don't wear repellent for fear of contaminating our traps!

What concerns you the most about the future of Lancaster County?

All the precipitation we have been receiving! I am hoping that the wet areas that haven't dried up since (last) summer get the chance to do that before spring comes.

Questions answered via email

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