

## Protect yourself from pests during early season hunts

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Not only do early season hunts come with the thrill of hunting wildlife at the beginning of the season, they can also come with tormenting hordes of mosquitoes, ticks, and chiggers seemingly trying to get every drop of your blood. Mosquito biting can be intense in late summer and early fall, leading to itchy welts and possibly diseases such as West Nile Virus. At times, these little flying nuisances may create a literal fog around your face. Mosquitoes are not the only pests you may encounter in the woods. Ticks and chiggers can be waiting for the opportunity to attack your legs as you walk to and from your stand during early warm hunting seasons. During late July through September, seed ticks (first stage ticks) begin emerging,

At times, thousands of these tiny immature ticks can be nestled all in one area, prepared to seize their next target. Like mosquitoes, ticks can cause itchy welts that may also transmit a number of diseases such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Immature mites known as chiggers may also be found in wooded areas. These pests do not bite in the strictest sense of the word, but attach to the skin and cause intense itching. The good news is that chiggers do not transmit diseases in North America. Even though all these biting pests are plentiful and at times intense, they should never stop you from getting outdoors and enjoying an early season hunt or other family adventures. There are many ways to protect you and your family from insects and other pests while venturing in the great outdoors. Mosquitoes are mostly active from dusk through dawn so one way to avoid them is to stay out of

the woods at night. However, mosquitoes may bite during the day if you are located in swampy or low lying, shaded areas. Other ways of protecting yourself from mosquitoes include wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and a mesh head net in severe situations to prevent them from landing on your face (hunters and fishermen commonly wear head nets in Canada and Alaska). Ticks and chiggers may be avoided by wearing rubber boots with pant legs tucked into the boots. Doing this will prohibit the pests, which are living in the lower ground shrubbery and grasses in shaded areas, from climbing on you as you walk through the woods. One of the most effective ways of protecting yourself from insects is using repellents containing DEET or other active ingredients such as picaridin. DEET-based repellents have a long track record of effectiveness against a wide variety of insects, ticks and mites. The amount of DEET in products varies in different percentages from low amounts such

as 1 to 2 percent up to 100 percent. Higher rated percentages may provide more protection and longer duration between applications, but overall, the benefit is not worth potential risks of over-exposure to DEET. When used according to the label, DEET is generally very safe and effective. DEET is available in many different formulations such as aerosol sprays, wipes and lotions. The most common applications of repellents are aerosol sprays applied to skin (mainly for repelling mosquitoes), inside and outside of the pants leg (ticks and chiggers), and shoes (chiggers). Lately, some herbal repellents have come on the market that may provide some protection against biting insects. However, these natural repellents are not as effective as DEET.

Also relatively new to the market is the Thermacell and other similar mosquito repellent devices that can be

placed near you when outdoors, creating a barrier around you. Many hunters attest to the effectiveness of these mosquito-repelling devices and would not be caught in the woods without one during early season hunts. These devices use a butane lighter to heat a pad that releases insecticide (allethrin) into the air. They are generally effective only within the immediate area around you. Early season hunting can be some of the best and most enjoyable of the entire year. At that time, deer and other game animals have not been disturbed and are not as cautious as they are later in the fall. One main problem with early season hunting is that cold weather has not arrived, leading to intense insect, tick and mite nuisance biting. However, these problems can be overcome with a combination of appropriate clothing and repellents. Go out and enjoy the woods!

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