

Midges vs. Mosquitoes

It's that time of year again where all the pests come out to play (and bite). With warmer temperatures there have been increased reports of mosquitoes plaguing our residents; however, not all bites can be blamed on the most dangerous animal in the world (though mosquitoes have earned their fair share of blame). This time of year, all number of insects appear in abundance, including nonbiting and biting midges. The term "midge" applies to small, two-winged flies that are generally seen swarming near or over water, so the word can apply to multiple species and even different families of insects. Nonbiting midges, aka "blind mosquitoes" appear in droves from lakes and ponds and are generally a sign of poor water quality. These midges, often mistaken for immature mosquitoes can be seen in mass numbers, frequently resting on the side of houses or near lights. Though these midges are a nuisance due to their numbers and the stains they can leave on paint, they will not bite.

Their counterpart, the biting midge, is better known as the "sandfly" or "no-seeum" by most South Walton residents. Florida has 47 species of sandflies, but only seven tend to impact humans. These midges are generally found along coastal areas, as most breed in mangroves and salt marshes. Though sandflies are mainly active around dawn and dusk, they can be particularly pestiferous on cloudy and calm days. Often when residents experience small, painful bites but don't see or hear mosquitoes, this biting midge is to blame. Currently the district's countywide traps are currently collecting high numbers of this pest.

Mosquitoes are most often seen at dusk and dawn, though there are several daytime biting species. All residents of South Walton County are welcome to file service requests so that a technician may come and investigate for mosquitoes or potentially other insect pests. While South Walton County Mosquito Control District (SWCMCD) may not have the means to control all pests, technicians can provide an assessment and suggest potential ways for residents to protect themselves. Insect repellents containing DEET are recommended to repel mosquitoes, ticks, mites, gnats, and blood-feeding flies.