

THE CAPITAL TIMES

Madison, WI

Evening Circulation - 20,009

AUGUST 21, 2000

Don't be too quick to condemn lifesaving pesticides

Dear Editor: People certainly should be concerned about the declining lobster population in New York. ("A deadly mosquito cure," Aug. 1) But we should not be so quick to assume that the pesticides sprayed to control mosquitoes killed the lobsters, nor should we dismiss the important role pesticides play in preserving the public health.

The Centers for Disease Control's reports on last year's outbreak of West Nile virus provide

an illustration of the effectiveness of vector control.

After New York City initiated its spraying program, no new onsets of West Nile Virus were reported in the city. But in the outlying counties that hesitated to embark on a pesticide spraying campaign, cases of West Nile virus continued to occur.

This is hardly a revelation. Public health authorities in the United States and abroad have long used insecticides and other measures to

control vector-borne disease. We are fortunate that in the United States such measures have made diseases such as malaria, which was endemic in Wisconsin as recently as 1941, pieces of distant historical trivia. "Quick chemical fixes," as you call them, have saved millions of lives around the world and doubtless will continue to do so.

Jennifer Zambone
environmental policy analyst
Competitive Enterprise Institute
Washington, D.C.