

fish are more environmentally friendly than constant spraying with pesticides. One problem with putting a cover on the pool is that the cover's exterior can collect water and breed mosquitoes, if left unchecked.

"This is how we are supposed to take care of things," says Robert Kloeping, who lives next to a vacant home with a pool containing mosquito fish in Antioch, Calif. "I think it's cool, man. It's organic."

The fish face a bleak future once they've done their job. Some begin eating each other after they run out of mosquito larvae. When the houses are sold, new owners can collect the fish and return them to the mosquito-control agency. In some cases, the environmental services department in Maricopa County, Arizona offers to come back and round up the fish it dumped in pools. But most fish will probably die as home owners drain the pools or begin treating them so they can swim in them.

"That's part of the program," says Chris Miller, a biologist at the Contra Costa mosquito and vector control district. "They are sacrificial."

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