

18 December, 2018

Mosquito warning for Georges River area

A substantial increase in mosquito numbers along the Georges River following recent high tides has prompted a health warning to residents and visitors to the area to cover up.

Routine trapping by South Eastern Sydney Local Health District's Public Health Unit found very high numbers of the saltmarsh mosquito, a potential carrier of Ross River and Barmah Forest viruses.

The District's Public Health Director, Professor Mark Ferson said while there have been no locally-acquired cases confirmed to date, people need to take precautions.

"There is no specific treatment for these viruses which can affect people for months, so the best way to avoid infection is to avoid being bitten," Professor Ferson said.

"Last year, there were more than 1500 Ross River notifications in NSW, so people need to protect themselves from bites and see their GP if they develop symptoms."

Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus are spread by mosquitoes that feed on infected animals. Symptoms include tiredness, rash, fever, sore and swollen joints.

Simple steps to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes include:

- Avoid being outside, unprotected, when mosquitoes are common at dawn and dusk. When outside, cover up as much as possible with light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing and covered footwear.
- Apply mosquito repellent regularly to exposed areas (as directed on the container). Repellents containing Diethyl Toluamide (DEET) or Picaridin are best.
- Don't use repellents on the skin of children under the age of three months. Instead use physical barriers such as netting on prams, cots and play areas for babies.
- Eradicate mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as containers that hold water.
- Use flyscreens on windows and doors of houses and keep them in good order.
- When camping, use flyscreens, or sleep under mosquito nets.

"Next week we are expecting an even higher tide which may also lead to very high numbers of the saltmarsh mosquito around the Georges River," Professor Ferson said.

For local data on notifications in South Eastern Sydney residents with Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus infections, go to:

<https://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/services-clinics/directory/public-health/public-health-data-and-research> and click on 'Arbovirus Surveillance Report.'

For a copy of the NSW Health fact sheets on Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus and infections, go to:

http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Barmah_Forest_virus_infection.aspx
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Ross-River-Fever.aspx>