



## Mosquitoes

### Introduction

This information sheet outlines facts on the most commonly asked questions to do with mosquitoes and mosquito control.

### Information and Advice

Worldwide, mosquito borne viruses and parasites are major causes of human and animal sickness and death. There are almost 100 species of mosquitoes in Western Australia and many of them can be serious pests, interfering with leisure time and outdoor activities. Therefore it is important for people to take personal measures to reduce the risk of contracting disease and to reduce the breeding.

Mosquito bites cause discomfort and pain, particularly to babies and those with sensitive skin. Only the female mosquito bites. They need blood to be able to develop their eggs. While taking blood, infected mosquitoes can pass on disease-causing viruses and parasites. Exposure to large numbers of mosquitoes increases the chance of being infected with mosquito borne disease.

### What are state and local governments doing with mosquito control?

The Department of Health, in collaboration with local governments, conducts mosquito control programs in areas where mosquitoes are suspected of carrying disease. However, despite these programs Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus (see description under *What is the most common mosquito borne virus in WA*) will always be a threat as they occur in natural cycles and it is not possible to eliminate all mosquitoes.

### What is the mosquito's life cycle?

During summer the life cycle from egg to flying adult mosquito takes 4 –10 days. In colder months the life cycle may take several weeks.

### How can I eliminate mosquitoes from my backyard?

**Eliminate Breeding Areas:** Mosquitoes breed in standing water – such as that which may occur in old car tyres and other water holding containers, pot plant drip trays, septic and water tanks, roof gutters, domestic ponds etc. Removal and prevention of backyard breeding is a permanently effective control.

### Following are some examples how this can be achieved:

- Keep ornamental ponds stocked with mosquito-eating fish e.g. Goldfish.
- Keep margins free of vegetation.
- Keep swimming pools well chlorinated and filtered, as well as free from leaves.
- Fill or drain depressions in the ground that hold water.
- Screen rainwater tanks with insect proof mesh.
- Ensure guttering does not hold water.
- Empty pot plant drip trays once a week or fill with sand.
- Reporting other areas of breeding (outside your property) to the Environmental Health Department for treatment.

### How can I avoid being bitten?

To minimise your exposure to mosquitoes the following advice may be helpful:



- Avoiding areas of high mosquito activity such as near salt marshes, stagnant water and poorly maintained drainage systems.
- Avoid being outdoors during times of peak mosquito activity such as dawn and dusk. Sometimes during calm and overcast days certain mosquito species are prevalent throughout the day in certain areas such as adjacent to salt marshes.
- Plan your outdoor activities with mosquitoes in mind and avoiding times where high numbers of mosquitoes are known to have emerged. This may occur up to 8 weeks after a cyclone or very heavy rainfall.
- Wear loose clothing which covers exposed skin areas where practical such as long sleeves and long trousers. Mosquitoes can bite through tight fitting fabric such as denim.
- Mosquito repellents are an effective way of avoiding exposure to mosquitoes. However, as with all chemicals they should be applied in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, especially infants and young children and only as a last resort where all other control measures are not practical or possible. Repellents, which contain the active ingredient DEET at 5% or above, or picardin are effective at deterring mosquitoes.

#### **What is the most common mosquito borne virus in WA?**

**Ross River Virus** The numbers of cases depend on many factors including natural cycles of virus and mosquito prevalence. The actual numbers of people with mosquito borne viruses are likely to be much higher because many people with the disease do not seek medical assistance and are therefore not diagnosed. Symptoms include joint pains and swelling, sore muscles, rash, fever and fatigue. These symptoms may persist for several months.

**Barmah Forest Virus** Similar symptoms as the above Ross River Virus.

#### **Additional Information**

If you would like additional information on mosquito control, please contact the Shire of Exmouth Environmental Health Services on (08) 9949 3000.