

Shire of Broome

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Media Release



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For immediate release

Mosquito-borne disease warning for Broome and the West Kimberley

The Shire of Broome is reminding people living and holidaying in Broome and the Kimberley to continue to take precautions to avoid mosquito bites, following evidence of continued activity of mosquito-borne viruses in the region.

Manager of Health Services at the Shire, Danielle Rippin said that the WA Department of Health's surveillance program had detected activity of Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) and Kunjin viruses in the Broome region.

"MVE and Kunjin viruses are both carried by mosquitoes, and while the risk of being infected and becoming unwell is low, the illnesses can be severe and people should take sensible precautions to avoid mosquito bites," she said.

Although rare, these viruses can cause severe symptoms which include headache, neck stiffness, fever, delirium and coma and some MVE infections can result in permanent brain damage or even death.

"In young children, fever might be the only early sign, so parents should see their doctor if concerned, and particularly if their child experiences drowsiness, floppiness, irritability, poor feeding, or general distress. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should seek medical advice quickly," she said.

Ms Rippin said that the MVE and Kunjin viruses were not normally active for this long into the dry season. Despite this, it was still important that people took note of the warning. People do not need to alter their plans to visit Broome and other areas of the Kimberley as a result of the warning. However, it is important to avoid mosquito bites by taking a few simple steps, such as:

- avoiding outdoor exposure from dusk and at night in any areas of high mosquito activity;
- wearing protective (long, loose-fitting) clothing when outdoors;
- using a personal repellent containing diethyl toluamide (DEET) or picaridin. The most effective and long-lasting formulations are lotions or gels. Most natural or organic repellents are not as effective as DEET or picaridin;
- ensuring insect screens are installed and completely mosquito-proof: use mosquito nets and mosquito-proof tents: and
- ensuring infants and children are adequately protected against mosquito bites, preferably with suitable clothing, bed nets or other forms of insect screening.

Ends