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For immediate release

After the rain: Shire of Broome commences program to combat mosquito-borne diseases

While the heavy rains that lashed the Shire of Broome last week from ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie caused relatively minor damage in Broome, they have presented an increased risk of exposure to mosquito-borne diseases in town and surrounding communities.

The Shire has commenced a pest management program, with its environmental health officers monitoring standing bodies of water around Broome for mosquito larvae and treating areas when required to prevent successful breeding.

So far, there has been limited mosquito breeding in drains, basins and flood water since the rain stopped, likely due to high temperatures and water levels dropping fast enough to prevent mosquito eggs and larvae from surviving. But Mosquito trapping will be carried out to identify possible breeding sites and the risk to public health.

Should there be a spike in mosquito numbers, the Shire will spray insecticide in public spaces to control larvae and, if required, adult mosquitoes.

With the Shire's efforts are concentrated on public areas, it is worth noting mosquito breeding is most likely to occur on private properties, in dense vegetation and standing water.

Broome Shire President Harold Tracey said controlling mosquito numbers will best succeed if residents and business owners take simple measures to prevent larvae from hatching on their properties.

"Take a look around the property and remove or clean out anything that can hold water, such as toys, pot-plant bases, tyres, your pet's water bowl, and even palm fronds.

"You can also purchase residual pesticides to apply around your property to further reduce the risk of exposure."

Even with all these measures in place, it is impossible to eradicate mosquitos, particularly during the wet season.

With the risk of mosquito-borne diseases ever present, the environmental health officers are taking blood samples from sentinel chicken flock, which acts as an early warning system for West Nile Virus Kunjin Strain and Murray Valley Encephalitis.

While these diseases are yet to be detected locally, it is important to take protective measures against mosquito bites whenever outdoors, such as:

Covering up: Wear long, loose-fitting, light-coloured clothing. Mosquitos can still bite through tight-fitting clothing such as leggings.

Repelling: Use a DEET or picaridin-based repellent as per the instructions. Citronella and other natural-based repellents are not recommended as there is no evidence they can prevent mosquito-borne disease. Patches, wristbands and other similar products are also not recommended on their own.

For more information on mosquitos and mosquito control, select the Pest Control tab at broome.wa.gov.au/community/environmentalhealth or visit fightthebite.com.au

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