

This Bulletin is produced on behalf of the Parks & Regions Group Workplace Health and Safety Committee, keeping staff updated on new Workplace safety initiatives, the theme of the quarter and other information in regards to Workplace safety.

*“Safety within the Group is vital and improving safety to all Group staff is of highest priority.
Look after your workmates!”*

Mosquito Spread (arboviral) Diseases

Following the recent sustained wet weather and high river levels, an increased number of mosquitoes has been noted in the region. In addition, the recent storms left a lot of debris that allowed water to collect, which has created a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

There are a number of mosquito-borne disease that are well established in SA and for which we should be taking preventive measures. It is always best to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes, by following the strategy of 'Exclusion, Restriction and Destruction' similar to 'Slip, Slop and Slap' for sun protection. The strategies used to reduce this risk can include the following;

Exclusion:-

Flyscreens on doors and windows (in good condition)

Keep car windows closed

Wear long sleeves and long trousers

Mosquito nets on tents and swags

Fly nets over hats during the day

Restriction:-

Use insect repellents

Avoid working on flood plains where possible, especially at times of high mosquito activity e.g. dawn and dusk

Destruction:-

Use aerosol insecticides

Insect traps or UV bug killers

Waterway management to remove or treat breeding areas

The most common diseases spread by mosquitoes in SA are; Ross River virus, Barmah Forest virus, Stratford virus (STRV), Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) virus, and Kunjin (KUN) virus. With RRV and BFV the signs are flu-like symptoms, body rashes, swelling of joints, lymph glands and long term weakness. There are no vaccines for these virus, some people may suffer mild symptoms for a few weeks, others may have symptoms for up to a year.

MVE is endemic to northern Australia but activity in the southeast has been associated with high rainfall and subsequent bird and mosquito population increases. Symptoms of MVE are; fever, tiredness, headaches, nausea, tremors and seizures. Approximately only 1 person in 1000 will develop MVE symptoms after being bitten by an infected mosquito, with the infection progressing to seizures, possibly developing into meningitis or encephalitis. With MVE there can be a high rate of infection (1 in 500 people) without noticeable symptoms, but in those that do have worsening symptoms and develop encephalitis, only 40% of those cases recover completely. The incubation period is 7 – 12 days and people are not contagious. Survivors will have life-long immunity.



What's being done to control mosquitoes and the spread of these diseases?

There is an Arbovirus Response Cross Agency Group (ARCAG) which convenes at the start of each mosquito season. This group act as a mechanism for key stakeholder agencies to be kept informed and provide feedback to SA Health of mosquito control programs. ARCAG also provide assistance to SA Health for effective communication of information and intelligence, plus assist with coordinated responses to arboviral disease outbreaks.

The University of SA coordinates mosquito surveillance trapping for local councils in high risk areas; Renmark-Paringa, Berri-Barmera, Loxton-Waikerie, Mid-Murray, Murray Bridge, Coorong and Alexandrina, and Salisbury. There are 41 mosquito surveillance trap sites monitored by Uni SA. Sites are monitored from September to April. Another method of surveillance is by checking infection rates in chickens at Paringa, Loxton, Qualco, Murray Bridge and Meningie, by testing blood samples on a monthly basis.

Similar to Bushfire Risk Ratings, there is a hierarchy of response established for risks, data from monitored sites and the number of detected cases of arboviral diseases in people in SE Australia especially along the River Murray. This is set out in the South Australian Arbovirus Coordinated Control and Operations Plan. The responses range from continue monitoring, to the highest level, which includes coordinated adult mosquito eradication and targeted larvae control.

Please be aware of these risks, ensure you are prepared especially from September to April and remember to '**Fight the Bite**'.

<http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Public+Content/SA+Health+Internet/Healthy+living/Protecting+your+health/Fight+the+Bite/>

If you have more detailed questions or need clarification you can seek advice through the Workplace Safety and Wellbeing team's Consultants.

