

# » mosquito factsheet

June 2019



Within Australia there are more than 300 different species of mosquito but only a small number cause nuisance biting problems or spread disease-causing pathogens.

## » Are mosquitoes a health concern?

The two most common mosquito-borne diseases in our local area are Ross River Virus and Barmah Forest Virus.

These diseases are not fatal but can cause symptoms including joint pain, muscle tiredness, fatigue, fever, and rash that may last from days to months.

Mosquitoes within Ballina Shire do not transmit dengue or malaria.

## » Why do mosquitoes bite?

Only the female mosquito will bite humans. The female mosquito needs the protein in a blood meal to help develop their eggs.

Mammals including wallabies, birds, dogs, cats, snakes, and other native wildlife are other blood sources. While taking blood they can pass on disease-causing viruses and parasites.

Exposure to large numbers of mosquitoes may increase the chance of being infected with a mosquito-borne disease.

## » Did you know?

Not all mosquitoes think humans are tasty - just the females. In fact, our blood is essential for them to develop eggs.

## » What are Ross River virus & Barmah Forest virus?

Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus are infections that are spread to humans through mosquito bites.

Mosquitoes are not “born” infected with either virus, they must acquire the viruses from an infected animal. The viruses occur throughout most regions of Australia. Human infections tend to occur more often in regions with a warm, humid climate that are close to bodies of water where mosquitoes breed.

Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus have the same symptoms including fatigue, rashes and muscle aches and pains. There is no specific treatment; however plenty of rest, moderate exercise and healthy eating may help reduce the recovery time.

## » How to protect yourself from mosquitoes?

- when outside cover up as much as possible by wearing loose fitting, light coloured clothing and covered footwear
- avoid being outside when mosquitoes are most active, around dusk and dawn
- applying a topical insect repellent - choose any product that contains DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Apply an even coat over all exposed areas of skin and you'll get the longer lasting protection
- light mosquito coils or use vapour mats indoors. Devices that use light to attract and electrocute insects have been proven to be ineffective in reducing mosquito numbers
- cover all windows, doors, vents and other entrances with insect screens.



## »» **What is Ballina Council doing about the mosquito problem?**

There are dozens of different types of mosquito in the local environment. Some love salt water wetlands while others are found in freshwater wetlands, brackish water woodlands, and our backyards. With so many mosquitoes found in so many different places, it can be very difficult for local councils to control mosquito populations, even if they have the resources to do it.

Given the extensive and diverse nature of mosquito habitats within the shire, broad scale mosquito control is not considered a sustainable strategy.

Although Ballina Shire Council has never undertaken spraying for the control of mosquitoes, we work with nearby councils and NSW Health to better understand the local risks associated with mosquitoes and mosquito-borne disease. Council's Environmental Health Officers are actively involved in mosquito monitoring during the warmer months and data collected is provided to NSW Health to assist in minimising mosquito borne risk. In conjunction with this Program Council regularly undertakes community education programs.

Additionally, Council work with planning consultants, entomologists and landscape architects to ensure new development is designed to minimise the exposure of residents to mosquitoes. Council's Development Control Plan has controls for new developments to help minimise the impacts of mosquitoes. This includes things like:

- placing an open buffer between a mosquito habitat and the development
- ensuring any vegetation, water holding devices, including stormwater infrastructure, do not provide mosquito habitat.

Council continues to engage experts to review the provisions in Council's Development Control Plan so they can be improved to further minimise mosquito impacts.

These reviews inform Council of best practice and leading science to minimise nuisance and public health risks associated with mosquitoes.

## »» **How to minimise mosquitoes at home?**

- empty out bird baths, pet water bowls, and water features with a hose on a weekly basis
- dispose of pot plant bases, or empty and clean the base weekly
- tip out, cover up, or throw away any containers that collect water - mosquitoes love these
- ensure gutters are kept free of leaves and drain freely
- keep swimming pools chlorinated or salted and operate the pool pump all year round
- screen all openings to tanks, wells, and other large water containers
- stock fishponds with native fish that will feed on mosquito eggs and larvae.

## »» **Did you know?**

Council engages mosquito experts to inform us on best practice and leading science to minimise mosquito impacts.

»» **If you have any questions or concerns please contact:**

Public and Environmental Health Section, Ph 1300 864 444.