

DATE: 31 March 2023

Public health alert - Mosquito warning for Moree community

Hunter New England Local Health District is alerting the Moree community and surrounding areas to protect themselves against mosquito bites following detections of Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) and Kunjin virus.

Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) and Kunjin virus antibodies have been recently detected in sentinel chicken flock located in the Moree area, indicating the viruses are circulating in the mosquito population.

Dr Peter Murray, Acting Director, Hunter New England Public Health Unit, is urging the Moree community to take careful precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.

“It’s important to be vigilant about protecting yourself from mosquito bites as mosquitoes can spread Kunjin and Murray Valley encephalitis viruses,” Dr Murray said.

“Only a small proportion of people infected with these viruses will have any symptoms, which include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, diarrhoea, and muscle aches.

“While most people won’t develop any symptoms when infected with Kunjin or Murray Valley encephalitis, Occasionally these viruses can cause severe neurological illness.

Signs of severe infection include severe headache, neck stiffness, sensitivity to bright lights, drowsiness, confusion, seizures, and loss of consciousness.

“There is no vaccine or specific treatment for these viruses. The best way to avoid infection is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes,” Dr Murray said.

Protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites by:

- wearing light, loose-fitting long-sleeved shirts, long pants and covered footwear and socks, especially around dusk and dawn
- applying repellent to all areas of exposed skin, using repellents that contain DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus
- re-applying repellent regularly, particularly after swimming, being sure to always apply sunscreen first and then apply repellent
- covering openings such as windows and doors with insect screens and checking there are no gaps in them
- removing items that might collect water (such as old tyres, empty pots) outside your house where mosquitoes can breed

- improving drainage on your property so that water does not become stagnant
- using insecticide sprays, vapour dispensing units and mosquito coils to repel mosquitoes (mosquito coils should only be used outside).

For more information visit [Mosquito-borne diseases](#).

Fact sheets on specific mosquito-borne diseases, including Murray Valley encephalitis and Kunjin virus, [are available here](#).