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## SUMMER HOLIDAY SEASON BRINGS ROSS RIVER AND BARMAH FOREST VIRUS RISK

NSW Health is urging people to guard against mosquito-borne diseases – particularly when holidaying in rural, coastal and bushy areas.

The incidence of Ross River and Barmah Forest virus infections increases greatly during summer, due to greater mosquito activity and more people spending time in bushy areas around Sydney as well as in coastal and rural areas across the state.

NSW Health's Director of Health Protection NSW, Jeremy McAnulty, said these viruses can cause unpleasant symptoms including, rash, fever, sore and swollen joints and tiredness.

"There is no specific treatment for these viruses. Symptoms usually last a few days, but some people may experience more debilitating symptoms for weeks and occasionally longer," Dr McAnulty said.

"The best way to avoid being sick is to avoid being bitten."

Dr McAnulty said recent trapping detected Ross River virus in mosquitoes caught near the Georges River at Bankstown.

"While virus activity is more active in most rural and coastal areas of the state, we occasionally find viruses in Sydney's bushy areas and near waterways, too," said Dr McAnulty.

"People should take steps to avoid mosquito bites. Routine surveillance only captures a small sample of mosquitoes and it is likely that mosquitoes elsewhere in the state are also carrying viruses already," Dr McAnulty said.

Ways to avoid mosquito bites include:

- Avoid being outside, unprotected, when mosquitoes are common including dawn and dusk. When outside cover up as much as possible with light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing and covered footwear.
- Apply mosquito repellent regularly to exposed areas (as directed on the container). Repellents containing Diethyltoluamide (DEET) or Picaridin are best.

- Don't use repellents on the skin of children under the age of three months. Instead use physical barriers such as netting on prams, cots and play areas for babies.
- Eradicate mosquito breeding sites around the home by tipping out or covering any water holding containers
- Use flyscreens on windows and doors of houses and keep them in good order.
- When camping, use flyscreens, or sleep under mosquito nets.

For a copy of the NSW Health fact sheet on Ross River Fever, Barmah Forest virus or Murray Valley Encephalitis go to:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Ross-River-Fever.aspx>

[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Barmah\\_Forest\\_virus\\_infection.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Barmah_Forest_virus_infection.aspx)

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Factsheets/mve.PDF>

For more information on surveillance, see <http://medent.usyd.edu.au/arbovirus/>