

MEDIA STATEMENT



Monday, 4 April 2016

Mosquito numbers the lowest in years

Bunbury has experienced one of its mildest mosquito seasons in recent years despite a minor jump in numbers last week caused by ideal breeding conditions.

An aerial treatment carried out last Wednesday in response to an increase in numbers has been confirmed as successful with City of Bunbury environmental officers finding no sign of mosquito larvae in the mangroves area on the shores of the Leschenault Inlet on Friday.

The City requested the treatment, which is coordinated by the Department of Health, after routine monitoring revealed increased concentrations of larvae in the mangroves area. Residents in East Bunbury also reported an increase in adult mosquitoes.

The spike in numbers was the result of ideal breeding conditions, which included warm temperatures and water being trapped in runnels that are designed to move water from the mangroves area with normal tidal patterns, which in turn removes the mosquito breeding environment.

Environmental approval is being sought to clear sand from the runnels to allow better drainage and prevent the creation of an ideal mosquito breeding ground.

City of Bunbury Environmental Health Manager Sarah Upton said overall Bunbury had experienced low numbers of mosquitoes this summer.

“This season has been well below average for mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases due to lower than average tides and very little rainfall through spring and summer,” Ms Upton said.

“It is very encouraging that when we do have an increase in activity, such as in the past week, our strategies produce fast and favourable outcomes.”

Last week’s aerial treatment targets only mosquito larvae, killing them off before they have a chance to evolve into adults. It does not affect any other plants, fish, insects or animals.

“This particular species of mosquito we have targeted is a nuisance now rather than a health risk,” Ms Upton said. “East Bunbury residents should notice a decline in mosquito numbers over the next week as the insects only have a life span of about two weeks.

“The increase in numbers was a localised occurrence and our monitoring last Friday showed that the treatment was very successful with no larvae found at our testing sites.”

It has also been confirmed that no cases of Ross River Virus have been reported in Bunbury this year.

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“The public should be aware that other mosquito-borne viruses such as Dengue Fever and the Zika virus cannot be contracted in Bunbury as we do not have the tropical climate required for those mosquitoes to breed,” Ms Upton said.

The public is still urged to heed the “Fight the Bite” message by taking precautions against mosquitoes during dusk and dawn, using insect repellent and wearing loose fitting clothing that covers as much skin as possible.

Ms Upton said the City of Bunbury would continue to carry out a range of strategies to monitor mosquito numbers, including trapping at key sites, water monitoring and the application of larvicides when required.

“These measures are carried out regularly throughout the warmer months and they play a significant role in keeping mosquito numbers down,” Ms Upton said.

Our officers are constantly monitoring tidal movements and weather patterns and are out on site at least weekly in known breeding areas and last week we highlighted how effective our quick response is to an increase in numbers.”

Mosquito management in the region is a co-operative effort between the City Bunbury, Dardanup and Harvey shires and the Department of Health.

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