

HAZARD ALERT

RISK MANAGEMENT SECTION



Department of
Environment and Conservation

Date: 24/09/2010

Alert No: 13

Source:

Internal

External

Author: The Department of Health

Identified Hazard:

Risk Rating:

Low

Moderate

High

Significant

Nature of Incident:

Injury

Property Damage

Near-hit

Other:

Description of Incident:

People living and holidaying in the north of Western Australia to take extra care against mosquito bites, following detection of the mosquito-borne Kunjin and Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) viruses in the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley regions.

Incident Time and Date:

The mosquito and virus surveillance program (undertaken by The University of Western Australia) had detected Kunjin virus in the Gascoyne and Pilbara and the potentially fatal Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) virus in several locations in the Kimberley in recent weeks.

Equipment Involved:

"Kunjin virus and Murray Valley encephalitis virus are both carried by mosquitoes, and while the risk of being infected and becoming unwell is low, the illnesses can be severe and people should take sensible precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

The warning is particularly important for people living, visiting or camping near swamp and river systems through the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley regions if mosquitoes are present.

Recommendations:

People do not need to alter their plans to visit the Gascoyne, Pilbara or Kimberley regions, but it is important to avoid mosquito bites by taking a few simple steps, such as:



- avoiding outdoor exposure from dusk and at night
- wearing protective (long, loose-fitting) clothing when outdoors
- using a personal repellent containing diethyl toluamide (DEET) or picaridin. The most effective and long-lasting formulations are lotions or gels. Most natural or organic repellents are not as effective as DEET or picaridin or need to be reapplied more frequently
- ensuring insect screens are installed and completely mosquito-proof: use mosquito nets and mosquito-proof tents
- ensuring infants and children are adequately protected against mosquito bites, preferably with suitable clothing, bed nets or other forms of insect screening.

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