

Monday, 7 March 2022

## **TWO NSW RESIDENTS IN HOSPITAL WITH JAPANESE ENCEPHALITIS**

NSW Health can confirm two people with Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) are currently being treated in hospital and is continuing to urge the public to be vigilant and safeguard themselves against mosquito bites.

Both people are residents of the NSW-Victoria border region – a man from the Corowa area and a child from the Wentworth area in the far south west of NSW. They are both currently being treated in hospitals in Victoria.

The man remains in a serious condition in ICU. The child has been discharged from ICU but continues to receive hospital care due to the serious nature of their illness.

Several more people in NSW are undergoing further testing, and more cases are expected to be confirmed over the coming days and weeks.

JEV is a viral illness spread by mosquitoes. It can infect animals and humans and has been confirmed in samples from a number of pig farms in regional NSW.

The virus cannot be transmitted between humans, and it cannot be caught by eating pork or pig products. Locally acquired cases of JEV have never previously been identified in NSW in animals or humans.

Mosquito control activities are being carried out in the vicinity of farms where pigs are confirmed to have been infected by JEV and NSW Health is arranging vaccination of workers on affected farms.

There is no specific treatment for JEV, which can cause severe neurological illness with headache, convulsions and reduced consciousness in some cases.

Dr Marianne Gale, NSW Health Acting Chief Health Officer, said the best thing people throughout the state can do to protect themselves and their families against JEV is to take steps to avoid mosquito bites.

“We are working closely with the NSW Department of Primary Industries and other states and territories to determine the extent to which the virus is circulating,” Dr Gale said.

‘Unfortunately, our recent wet weather has led to very high mosquito numbers, so we need the community to be particularly vigilant and take steps to avoid mosquito bites.

“We know mosquitoes are most active between dusk and dawn, and we need people planning activities near waterways or where mosquitoes are present to be especially cautious, particularly those in the vicinity of the Murray River and its branches.”

Simple actions you can take to avoid mosquito bites include:

- Avoid going outdoors during peak mosquito times, especially at dawn and dusk.
- Wear long sleeves and pants outdoors (reduce skin exposure). Also wear shoes and socks where possible. There are insecticides (e.g. permethrin) available for treating clothing for those spending extended periods outdoors.
- Apply repellent to all areas of exposed skin, especially those that contain DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus which are the most effective against mosquitoes. The strength of a repellent determines the duration of protection with the higher concentrations providing longer periods of protection. Always check the label for reapplication times.
- Reapply repellent after swimming. The duration of protection from repellent is also reduced with perspiration, such as during strenuous activity or hot weather so it may need to be reapplied more frequently.
- Apply the sunscreen first and then apply the repellent. Be aware that DEET-containing repellents may decrease the sun protection factor (SPF) of sunscreens so you may need to re-apply the sunscreen more frequently.
- For children in particular - most skin repellents are safe for use on children aged three months and older when used according to directions, although some formulations are only recommended for children aged 12 months and older - always check the product. Infants aged less than three months can be protected from mosquitoes by using an infant carrier draped with mosquito netting that is secured along the edges.
- Be aware of the peak risk times for mosquito bites. Avoid the outdoors or take preventive actions (such as appropriate clothing and skin repellent) between dawn and dusk when most mosquitoes become active, especially close to wetland and bushland areas.
- If camping, ensure the tent has fly screens to prevent mosquitoes entering.
- Mosquito coils and other devices that release insecticides can assist reducing mosquito bites but should be used in combination with topical insect repellents.
- Reduce all water holding containers around the home where mosquitoes could breed. Mosquitoes only need a small amount of liquid to breed.

For further information on mosquito-borne disease and ways to protect yourself go to: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/pests/vector/Pages/resources.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/pests/vector/Pages/resources.aspx)

Fact sheets on specific mosquito-borne diseases, including Japanese encephalitis, Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus, are available at: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/pests/vector/Pages/factsheets.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/pests/vector/Pages/factsheets.aspx)