

# FACT SHEET

## *Mosquitoes Far North Queensland*

### *General Information*

Mosquitoes are native insects which breed in salt, brackish or fresh waters and have been identified as being a major and significant threat to both human health and lifestyle throughout the world for many years. This has become prominent in Australia as a result of the climate, and the great outdoors that many Australians love. More than 220 mosquito species can be found in Queensland and a substantial number of these have been implicated as vectors of some human diseases. Some of these diseases include Ross River Virus, Barmah Forest Virus, Dengue Fever and Malaria.

Mosquitoes require water in which to breed. Females lay eggs on the surface of the water or the water's edge. The eggs then hatch into Larvae (wrigglers), which live under the surface of still water and breathe air through the surface. The Larvae go through four (4) stages before becoming Pupae (tumblers), which again live under water, emerging from the water soon after as an adult.

### *Lifecycle*

In Far North Queensland, this cycle can be completed in 7-10 days. Unlike the cooler southern areas, Cairns climate provides ideal breeding conditions all year round rather than only in the summer months.

Mosquitoes breed in many fresh and salt water areas around the home and in natural low-lying areas and water courses.

### *I Have Noticed A Lot Of Mosquitoes Around My House, What Can I Do?*

You can help minimise mosquito populations, by taking some of these simple actions to reduce breeding in your house and garden:

- Empty standing water out of old tyres, buckets, plastic covers, toys, pet drinking bowls, bird baths, pot plant trays or any other containers

- Where "wrigglers" and "tumblers" live in the house or garden.
- Drill holes in tyres used for swings and garden surrounds to allow water to drain from them.
- Drain or fill temporary pools and tree hollows and pot plant bases with sand.
- Keep swimming pools treated and circulating.
- Keep rain gutters unclogged.
- Avoid using water retaining plants – such as bromeliads in your garden. Where these are present, use a high-pressure spray to kill larvae.
- Clear out any palm fronds and other vegetation from your garden.
- Boats and dinghies should be overturned or have the drain plug removed.
- Screen all openings to tanks, wells or other large water containers with wire gauze no coarser than 1mm mesh.
- Cap brick walls made of cavity bricks to prevent water from pooling in the walls.
- Create a good 'buffer' zone between your house and any surrounding thick vegetation to avoid breeding sites. Ensure your lawn is cut regularly.



## ***What Can I Do To Protect Myself And My Family From Mosquitoes?***

- Make sure window and door screens are “bug tight”.
- Avoid watering your garden around sunset. This is the time that mosquitos are most active and will be attracted to humid areas.
- Use a fan. This discourages mosquitoes from landing and biting.
- Use mosquito repellents following label directions and precautions closely.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants, light coloured and loose-fitting clothes, especially around dusk.
- Spray surfaces, under tables and chairs, behind doors where mosquitoes rest with a residual surface spray.

## ***Repelling Mosquitoes Naturally***

Some plants and herbs that grow in many gardens have the potential to repel mosquitoes. These include:

- Basil, Marigold, Pennyroyal and Rye planted in pots near doorways and windows.
- Leaves can also be rubbed onto the skin.
- Mint, lavender, onion and garlic- used in a spray from equal parts soaked in water for 24 hours.
- Pelargonium Citrosa (citrus geranium)- offers localised protection by releasing a citronella scent.



## ***Common Disease Symptoms***

Ross River Virus:

- Arthritis, rashes, fever, muscle soreness, headaches, weariness and generally feeling unwell.

Dengue Fever:

- Tiredness, headache, fever, rash, joint pains and vomiting.



## ***Further Information***

Contact Queensland Health Tropical Population Health Unit or Mareeba Shire Council on 1300 308 461 who can answer any questions you may have in relation to Mosquitoes and their breeding/life cycle.