MEDIA RELEASE

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Dengue fever case in South Burnett prompts public health warning about mosquitoes

A confirmed case of dengue fever in the South Burnett has prompted calls for residents to be vigilant about avoiding mosquito bites.

Darling Downs Public Health Unit Director Dr Penny Hutchinson said the person with dengue fever did not acquire the condition locally.

“The Public Health Unit is working closely with the local government within the region to put mosquito surveillance and control measures in place,” she said.

“I commend the work done by the South Burnett Regional Council to control the mosquito species Aedes aegypti which can transmit dengue and other container-breeding mosquitoes in this area.

“For an Aedes aegypti mosquito to be infected with the virus it needs to have bitten a person who already has dengue fever.

“While the transmission risk is low in this case, it is important to raise community awareness about avoiding mosquito bites and eradicating mosquitoes from the local area.”

Unlike other mosquitoes the Aedes aegypti mosquito is very domesticated and can be found living in the home.

“It likes to rest in dark places such as under tables and in cupboards and is a daytime-biting mosquito,” she said.

“It breeds around houses in containers like pot plants, tyres, garden ornaments or any other container where water is held.”

Dr Hutchinson said to limit the risk of mosquito-borne diseases it was important to reduce mosquito breeding around the home. This included:

- Emptying water from pot plants weekly and wipe them out –this will ensure mosquito eggs are eradicated
- Checking water tanks to ensure the screens are intact and not damaged and replace them if they are.
- Keeping your yard clean and free of discarded items such as plastic containers, tyres and old appliances.
- Removing debris from gutters.

She said individuals could protect themselves against mosquito bites by:

- Applying insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin.
- Wearing long-sleeved, light-coloured clothing
- Using insect surface spray, mosquito coils or plugged-in insecticide devices indoors.
• Repairing defective insect screens or fit new screens where possible.

“After being bitten by a dengue mosquito infected with the dengue virus, it usually takes between three and 14 days to start experiencing flu-like symptoms ranging from mild to severe,” Dr Hutchinson said.

“These include pain in muscles and joints, rashes, headaches and fever.

“During this time someone with the dengue virus is able to pass the virus on to other dengue mosquitoes, so if a dengue mosquito bites that person it can catch the virus and go on to infect other people.

“That is why it is very important for anyone from the area who has been bitten by a mosquito to visit a doctor as soon as they feel unwell with these symptoms.

“The dengue virus does not spread directly from person to person.”

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