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Ross River fever alert for Lt. Cantello Reserve and surrounds

Residents and visitors near Lt. Cantello Reserve in Hammondville should take extra precautions to protect themselves against mosquito-borne diseases such as Ross River virus.

South Western Sydney Local Health District Public Health Unit Director Dr Naru Pal said the NSW Arbovirus Surveillance and Mosquito Monitoring Program recently reported a detection of Ross River virus in mosquito isolates at the Lt. Cantello Reserve.

“Ross River virus is spread by mosquitoes that feed on infected animals,” Dr Pal said.

“Symptoms may include tiredness, rash, fever, and sore and swollen joints. While these symptoms usually subside after several days, some people may experience these symptoms for weeks, or even months.”

Anyone experiencing these symptoms should see their local doctor. Dr Pal said there was no specific treatment for these viruses.

“The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being bitten,” Dr Pal said.

Simple steps to avoid mosquito bites include:

- Avoid being outside, unprotected, when mosquitoes are common at dawn and dusk.
- When outside, cover up as much as possible with light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing and covered footwear.
- Apply mosquito repellent regularly to exposed areas (as directed on the container). Repellents containing Diethyl Toluamide (DEET) or Picaridin are best. Those containing oil of lemon eucalyptus also provide adequate protection.
- Don't use repellents on the skin of children under the age of three months. Instead use physical barriers such as netting on prams, cots and play areas for babies.
- Use insecticide sprays, vapour dispensing units (indoors) and mosquito coils (outdoors) to clear rooms or repel mosquitoes from an area. Eradicate mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as containers that hold water.
- Use flyscreens on windows and doors of houses and keep them in good order.
- When camping, use flyscreens, or sleep under mosquito nets.

For a copy of the NSW Health fact sheets on Ross River virus infections, go to:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Ross-River-Fever.aspx>