



Media Statement

Monday February 10 2014

Northern Goldfields warned to avoid March Flies

The WA Country Health Service (WACHS) has warned northern Goldfields residents to avoid being bitten by insects after several people were treated for painful reactions after been bitten by flies.

Three people have been treated at Laverton Hospital and one at Leonora last week for allergic-type reactions following fly bites.

Dr Clare Huppatz, WACHS-Goldfields Public Health Physician, said the increase in biting insects is probably linked to recent rains.

“Several people in Laverton and Leonora have experienced severe reactions after being bitten by flies, thought to be a species of March fly,” said Dr Huppatz.

“To avoid being bitten people should wear long-sleeved, loose fitting, light coloured clothing and a good insect repellent containing diethyl tolumide (also known as DEET)”.

“March flies are known to be attracted to dark blue, so it is advisable to avoid wearing blue and other dark colours.

“Also known as horse flies, March flies are stout-bodied flies measuring 6-25mm in length, with large eyes. There are more than 200 species and they can occur anywhere in Western Australia, in a range of habitats. They are most active during daylight hours.

“March flies are not known to transmit disease to humans or livestock in Australia. However, their bites are painful and can cause adverse allergic reactions in some people, sometimes requiring hospitalisation.

“Painful bites may be treated with ice packs and mild anti-histamines. If a bite becomes infected due to scratching, an antiseptic cream or antibiotic may be required. Patients with severe allergic reaction, such as widespread swelling or rash, or difficulty breathing should seek urgent medical attention”.

For more information call Goldfields Public Health Unit on 9080 8200 or the WA Health Environmental Health Directorate (08) 9383 1819.

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