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# Biosecurity consultant says Victorian farmers need to be more aware of mosquito-borne viruses

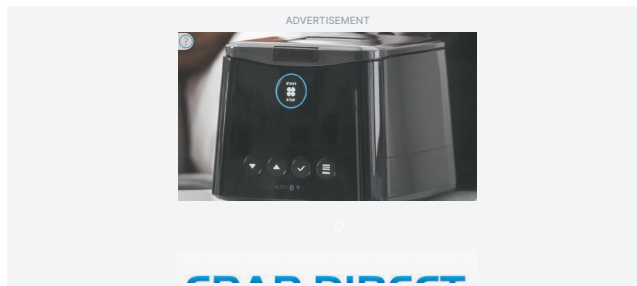
By David Chapman  
Updated March 24 2023 - 1:04pm, first published March 23 2023 - 12:12pm



Farmers are being cautioned about mosquito-borne viruses as more extreme weather events occur. Picture: Shutterstock

A biosecurity consultant to industry and government has warned Victorian farmers that they need to be more observant to the dangers of mosquito-borne diseases even months after major floods ravaged Victoria.

Ron Glanville, Woodend, who was a former Queensland chief veterinary officer said that more unusual weather patterns could expose farmers to the risk of a Murray Valley encephalitis infection.



Last week Victorian's Health Department confirmed [a third Victorian died from a confirmed case of Murray Valley encephalitis \(MVE\)](#).

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Dr Glanville said while it was clear major weather events increases risk for those who work outdoors, the spread of the diseases was "unpredictable".

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"It's important to be aware that these are complex systems between mosquitos, water birds and other interactions that animals have

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really been mainly seen in Cape York."

But despite that, he said people shouldn't be complacent in thinking that Victoria's cooler climate to Queensland means they have a lower risk of being infected.

"While it was a little bit of a surprise to see Japanese encephalitis here last year... in hindsight it's not surprising at all," he said.

"Any insect-borne virus is likely to increase in the wet conditions we had last year and as our climate changes and becomes more variable, we will see more of this kind of thing."

While less than one per cent of people develop severe disease from MVE Dr Glanville said farmers need to be aware of any symptoms that develop, which occur after 1-2 weeks after being bitten.

The only other animal that can be severely affected by MVE are horses.

"MVE isn't really a big issue with livestock, except for those farms who hold horses," Dr Glanville said.

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"There is a small number of people who get infected and have no or mild symptoms, but there are some cases where it can affect the brain badly and some can die."

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People who receive the disease may also display fever, nausea, vomiting and muscle aches.

Prior to the three deaths, the virus had not been seen in the state for 50 years.

All cases spent time in northern Victoria during their acquisition periods.

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encephalitis, with the government health department urging that those who work outdoors regularly to protect themselves against mosquito bites.

Human vaccines for Japanese encephalitis are available for people in high exposure areas, including piggeries and high-risk council areas.

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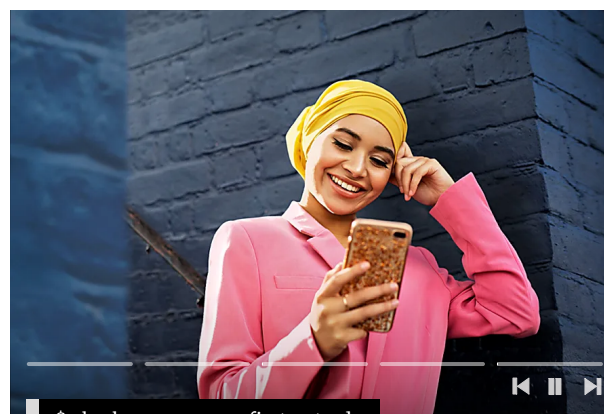
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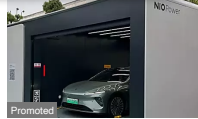
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