

MEDIA STATEMENT



Murray Cowper MLA

Shadow Minister for Employment Protection; Emergency Services

7 February 2008

Peel Mozzies bug prize Alpacas

Murray Cowper MLA last week visited Marilyn Jones' Alpaca farm in Stake Hill after reports that the mosquito problem in the area was getting out of hand.

He said that the mosquito problem in the area was due to the salt marshes that fringe the Peel-Harvey estuary, and it is these salt marsh areas that mosquito species that transmit Ross Rivers Virus like to breed in.

Of particular concern was the fact that there had been 40 confirmed cases of Ross Rivers Virus in the Peel region, up from nine in the same period last year. The disease causes painful joints, skin rashes, fever, chronic fatigue and headaches. It can be detected by blood test.

Whilst he congratulated the cooperation between the councils in relation to the spraying program, he said that more funding was needed from the State Government to extend the program to finish later than April as it currently does.

Previous letters to the Minister for Health from Mr Cowper have been unsuccessful in procuring more funds for the program.

Marilyn Jones of Stake Hill has had a vicious mosquito problem this year, with her prize alpacas being attacked by the pests. The alpacas have developed secondary infections from rubbing the bites.

Mr Cowper says that people need to be vigilant in ensuring that mosquitos are not breeding in water containers in their own backyards, ensuring insect screens are mosquito proof in their homes, and by using repellants containing DEET or picaridin, as natural and organic repellants are not as effective.

Human repellants can be used on animals, and ointments such as paw-paw or Vaseline and Dairy SAL (available from vets) can be used on the lesions.

It is also recommended to try and get animals indoors in the evenings when the mosquitos are at their worst.

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Photo : Marilyn Jones and her blue-ribbon Alpaca, Angelina, who has been attacked by vicious mosquitoes attracted to salt marshes fringing the Peel-Harvey Estuary.