

Dengue update 27 February 2019

The Ministry of Health has declared a dengue outbreak following the confirmation of seven dengue cases in Rarotonga in the past month. Of these cases, one was a visitor from French Polynesia with dengue serotype 3 (DENV-3), while the others were dengue serotype 1 (DENV-1). There are no dengue cases in the Pa Enea.

This week, health authorities have diagnosed four probable dengue cases, one of whom recently arrived from Fiji. Further diagnostic tests will be undertaken to confirm dengue and to determine the subtype.

The dengue virus has four serotypes, DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3, and DENV-4. Recovery from infection by one provides lifelong immunity against that serotype. Subsequent infections by other serotypes increases the risk of developing severe dengue.

In the last dengue outbreak in Rarotonga in 2009, the dengue virus serotype was DENV-4. The last DENV-1 outbreak occurred in 2007.

The public are reminded to:

1. Keep home and work environments clean – safely dispose water-retaining containers.
2. Avoid mosquito bites – cover up, use mosquito repellents, screen homes.
3. See your doctor if you develop fever, headache, pain behind the eyes, or muscle aches.
4. Avoid mosquito bites when visiting other countries experiencing dengue outbreaks.

Friday 22nd of February, saw the implementation of Operation Namu19 (Namu19), a whole of government and community clean-up-our-environment initiative aimed at destroying mosquito breeding and resting sites. Namu19 is the Cook Islands' national response to recent cases of dengue.

A large number of people participated in Namu19 including at least 250 public servants. Over 150 bags of general waste collected contained aluminium cans, tins, glass and plastic bottles. Other items such as motor vehicle parts, tyres, whiteware (freezers, fridges, ovens) and electronics equipment were removed.

Health security and health protection is a priority for the Ministry of Health and in 2019, the Ministry has increased the number of Tutaka (national house to house environmental risk assessments) to four, the first of which was completed prior to Namu19. Public Health will continue to undertake surveillance, awareness raising and closely monitor the situation including spraying of public areas such as schools. The Ministry of Health would like to acknowledge all those involved in Namu19.

End – 362 words.

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For more information, please visit the TMO website www.health.gov.ck or Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/CookIslandsHealth/> or contact the Public Health office on phone 29110 during normal office hours. For emergencies after hours please call Dr Uka on mobile 55588 or for hospital cases please call Dr May on mobile 55965.