

# Living with Mosquitoes

## MOSQUITOES IN THE LOWER HUNTER AND MID NORTH COAST REGION

Within Australia there are more than 300 different species of mosquito but only a small number are of a major concern. Over 30 mosquitoes have been identified from the Lower Hunter and Mid North Coast region of NSW, and these are found in a wide range of environments with each species grouped into one of the four general categories mentioned below. Mosquitoes are a natural part of coastal wetland ecosystems and will always be active during the warmer months of the year. Mosquitoes can be major biting pests and some can transmit arboviruses including Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus but other mosquitoes are not considered serious pests at all.

### **Estuarine Mosquitoes**

These mosquitoes are associated with coastal environments influenced by tides such as mangroves and saltmarshes. The most common mosquito is *Ochlerotatus vigilax*, The Saltmarsh Mosquito. This species lays eggs amongst saltmarsh vegetation and when the wetland is flooded by high tides and/or rainfall, larvae hatch from the eggs and can develop into adult mosquitoes within a week during the summer. Large populations of this mosquito occur during the summer months and they can travel many kilometres from estuarine wetlands.

### **Freshwater Mosquitoes**

There is a wide range of mosquitoes associated with freshwater environments that include permanent wetlands through to farm dams and temporary rainwater pools. While many of these freshwater mosquitoes pose little or no threat in the region, there are some species that can be serious pests. The Common Banded Freshwater Mosquito, *Culex annulirostris*, may be a major biting pest and is closely associated with well vegetated wetlands, and large populations can occur during periods of high rainfall. The Reed Mosquito, *Coquillettidia linealis*, can be a serious pest and is unique in that the immature stages of this mosquito attach themselves to the roots of aquatic vegetation.

### **Brackish Water Mosquitoes**

Some mosquitoes prefer to breed in the brackish (slightly salty) water environments within coastal regions including Melaleuca (Tea Tree) wetlands. These habitats are often temporary in nature. The most common mosquitoes include *Ochlerotatus multiplex*, *Ochlerotatus procax* and *Verrallina funerea*. These mosquitoes can be nuisance biting pests and are capable of transmitting disease but do not travel far from their breeding habitats.

### **Urban Mosquitoes**

There are some mosquitoes closely associated with urban environments. These mosquitoes can breed in a range of habitats, from small water holding containers, other water containing structures and highly polluted ponds. The Domestic Mosquito, *Ochlerotatus notoscriptus*, is often found breeding in receptacles, old pot plant saucers, bird baths, blocked gutters and used tyres. It does not travel far but as it is closely associated with urban areas, it can be serious pest. The Common Mosquito, *Culex quinquefasciatus*, is commonly found in highly polluted water including septic tanks and stormwater systems.