

# MOSQUITOES – FACT SHEET

Mosquitoes are a well-known pest that commonly interferes with activities in everyday life. Although people will do anything to avoid being bitten, mosquitoes are very good at finding their prey. Besides the nuisance factor, mosquitoes are carriers of some of humanity's most deadly illnesses and infectious diseases. There are more than 3,000 species of mosquitoes all over the world with approximately 300 known in Australia and unfortunately, they are here to stay.

## MOSQUITO BIOLOGY

Mosquitoes belong to the family of flies called Culicidae and are small fragile insects. Mosquito larvae develop into adults during warmer months of the year, usually in stagnant water that has been standing for at least 7 days. Some species will also thrive in brackish or salty habitats, so high tides together with flooding and coastal regions may also contribute to mosquito numbers in these areas. Some species are able to completely develop from eggs in less than a week. Most take 10-14 days to reach maturity, pointing out the fact that mosquitoes grow rapidly.

The females of many species of mosquitoes suck blood from humans and animals as part of their eating and breeding habits. While feeding on blood, some of them transmit harmful human diseases such as Malaria, Dengue Fever, Ross River Virus and Filariasis. Mosquitoes are also known to transmit disease in animals and livestock. Mosquitoes are primarily attracted to carbon dioxide and the smell of skin or body odors and this impacts their propensity to bite.

## MOSQUITO REPRODUCTION

On average, a female mosquito will live 2-3 weeks, but the male's lifespan is shorter.

Most female mosquitoes lay several hundred eggs and are able to generate large populations within a short period of time. Mosquitoes need water to reproduce. Although standing water is the prime location for mosquitoes to reproduce, there are many locations around the home that can promote egg laying areas.

Such places include water in the bottom of plant pots, drainage systems, buckets of water, swimming pools, shrubs, trees, firewood, slow moving water, fish ponds and bird baths.

Mosquito species vary in their breeding habits and flight range, with most dispersing less than two kilometres. Some move only a few metres away from their original breeding place.