

Health Warning: Insect Problems and Flooding

During flooding, residents may experience biting problems from small blood sucking blackflies, *Austrosimulium* spp. These usually breed in areas of running water in rivers and creeks with the adult flies typically remaining close to these breeding sites.

Flooding vastly increases the area suitable for breeding sites resulting in high numbers of adult blackflies. These are likely to disperse throughout adjacent towns within 5 – 7 days from the beginning of the flood.

Female blackflies bite humans and other mammals in open spaces seldom entering buildings. In open areas peak biting occurs around 8-10 am and 4 pm to sunset but in the shade the flies bite evenly throughout the day.

Blackflies are not vectors of disease in Australia but their bites can cause skin irritation and localized swelling to humans. Scratching the bites can cause secondary infections.

As it is not practical to apply insecticide to the wide area of flood water to control flies larvae, Adult flies can be controlled by fogging of affected areas with synthetic pyrethroid insecticides such as permethrin during their peak biting time. Spraying of vegetation where blackflies are resting can also reduce adult blackflies population. The best way to prevent blackfly bites is personal protection

Residents should wear protective light colour clothing and apply insect repellents containing DEET or Picaridin to exposed areas of the body. For children less than 6 months apply baby oil to unprotected areas instead of repellents. Mosquito coils are also effective in preventing blackflies entering outdoors living areas.

Calamine lotion can be used to minimise skin irritations caused by bites.