

# Keeping foreign mossies out!

**Malaria, dengue fever, and Ross River fever are serious and sometimes deadly diseases that can be carried by blood sucking mosquitoes.**

Fortunately these types of disease-carrying mosquitoes are not found in New Zealand and Canterbury DHB's Health Protection Officers are tasked with the job of ensuring it stays this way in Canterbury and South Canterbury.

Health Protection Officer Bruce Waddleton says there are two ways exotic mosquitoes can get into New Zealand – through International Airports and Seaports.



*Photo: Bruce Waddleton checking a mosquito trap.*

“If exotic mosquitoes were to sneak through, breed, and infect people, the results could be disastrous. The diseases they carry cause severe illness and can be fatal. An outbreak could have significant cost implications for the health system, and eradication campaigns can cost millions,” Bruce says.

An important part of Bruce's job is regularly visiting Lyttelton Port and Christchurch International Airport to look for adult mosquitoes and larvae in traps positioned in and around these facilities. As part of Bruce's role he also identifies potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Under the Biosecurity Act, he can ask the person or organisation responsible to remove any potential breeding spots he identifies. There are two types of traps: car tyres filled with stagnant water, which target mosquito larvae; and a more sophisticated trap that attracts adult mosquitoes using a combination of light and carbon dioxide.

Every fortnight over winter, and weekly in summer, Bruce empties the traps to look for adult mosquitoes or their larvae. “We can spot the larvae as they come up to the surface to breathe; otherwise it can be like looking for needles in a haystack.”

The larvae and mosquitoes Bruce catches are sent to a New Zealand Biosecurity laboratory in Wellington to see if they are native or exotic.

“Regularly emptying water out of things such as buckets, pot plants, and play equipment around the home is a key way to reduce the risk of exotic mosquitoes getting a foothold in New Zealand,” Bruce says.

Bruce says mosquitoes thrive in warmer months, especially after heavy rain.

“Mosquitoes struggle in the cold but as we head into spring and the weather gets warmer, areas of stagnant and pooled water can be perfect breeding grounds.

A number of exotic mosquitoes have been found at New Zealand borders but have failed to get established because of the work of Health Protection Officers and Biosecurity staff.

You too can help reduce how often your family gets bitten, as well as the risk that exotic mosquitoes will breed successfully, by getting rid of stagnant water that collects in garden containers.