



Guaranteeing Medicare – Response to Japanese Encephalitis Virus

The Australian Government is investing \$59 million in the response to the outbreak of Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV) to protect at risk Australians from the virus.

Japanese encephalitis virus, which is transmitted by mosquitos, has been detected in piggeries across different states, and a number of cases have now been confirmed in humans. The JEV outbreak has been declared a Communicable Disease Incident of National Significance.

The funding will provide:

- \$28.2 million to purchase 130,000 additional JEV vaccines – to be available from late March and into April
- \$17.5 million to support jurisdictions with mosquito surveillance and control activities
- \$5 million for public health communication to ensure people are aware of risk and how to prevent infection
- \$3.5 million for essential supplies to ensure sustained laboratory capacity and capability to test for JEV in humans, and
- \$4 million to support surveillance activities, such as modelling, geospatial analysis and conducting a serosurvey to better understand and map areas with higher risk of a JEV outbreak.

Why is this important?

Japanese encephalitis is a virus that is transmitted from infected animals, particularly pigs, to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. Infection in humans is most commonly asymptomatic, but in rare cases it can result in severe disease, and even death.

The virus, which does not normally occur in Australia, has been detected in piggeries across multiple states. A number of human cases of Japanese encephalitis have now been confirmed. People can protect themselves against the virus through simple measures such as insect repellants and clothing that helps prevent mosquito bites, and through vaccination.

The Australian Government's Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and the Department of Health have been collaborating closely, together with state and territory counterparts, in response to the JEV outbreak. The management of zoonotic diseases such as JEV is primarily the responsibility of states of territories.

Who will benefit?

The investment in vaccines and their targeted distribution will ensure that Australians most at risk of acquiring JEV, such as people working or living at, or visiting piggeries, as well as people who work with mosquito surveillance and control, and laboratory workers who may be exposed to JEV, have ready access to the vaccine to protect from infection.

Boosting surveillance and mosquito control activities will help authorities monitor any new sites of infection and help control the spread of the virus.

A communication strategy is vital to ensure key stakeholders - such as piggery operators, horse owners, and people living near areas of higher risk of JEV - are fully informed on how best to limit spread of the virus and protect against transmission.

How much will this cost?

The Australian Government will invest \$59 million in 2022–23.