



Mozzie numbers on the rise

By **Deborah Field**

MOSQUITOES that can spread Ross River and Barmah Forest viruses have spiked in numbers in and around Alford's Point.

Traps along the Georges River contained record numbers of the saltmarsh mosquito *Aedes vigilax* last week.

The Public Health Unit is warning residents and campers to avoid being outside if unprotected at dawn and dusk.

Saltmarsh mosquitoes breed in swamps along the river but have moved to surrounding suburbs following January's high tides.

Medical entomologist Cameron Webb is responsible for mosquito trapping in St George and Sutherland Shire.

He said a "perfect storm" of unseasonably warm spring temperatures, early summer rainfall and king tides had "sent mozzies



Feeling the sting: Cameron Webb checks a mosquito trap at Lugarno.

Picture: Jane Dyson

from the swamps and into our suburbs in record numbers".

Dr Webb, based at the University of Sydney and Pathology West, Westmead Hospital, said backyards were just as much of a

potential breeding ground for the disease-carrying insect.

"Tip out, throw away, or cover any water-holding containers around the home," Dr Webb said.

The local health district's

■ **Have you experienced an increase in mosquito numbers at home?**
theleader.com.au



public health director Mark Ferson said people should see a doctor for a blood test if they showed signs of tiredness, rash, fever and sore and swollen joints.

"Barmah Forest Ross River viruses are spread by mosquitoes that feed on infected animals," Professor Ferson said.

"There is no specific treatment for these viruses. The best way to avoid infection is to avoid being bitten."

Dr Webb said insect repellent containing DEET or Picardin should be applied to all exposed skin.

"If you miss a bit, the mozzies will bite," he said.

There are more than 30 different mosquito species in St George and the shire.

Some of these can travel up to 10 kilometres from wetlands.