



Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Health and Environment

**Statement to the
Senate
by Senator Lynne Woolridge, J.P.
Junior Minister of Health, Seniors and Environment
June 11, 2014
“CHIKUNGUNYA VIRUS”**

Madam President,

Thank you for the time to provide my fellow Senators with information on chikungunya (CHICKEN GUN YA).

Madam President, chikungunya is a viral disease that is spread by the bite of *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. These black mosquitoes have white stripes on their bodies and legs. They are not night time mosquitoes but bite mostly during the day, and favour cool shaded areas and the evening hours. They bite their victims on their lower legs and ankles.

Although we have not had any reported confirmed cases of Chikungunya in Bermuda, residents are being asked to inspect their properties regularly to find and eliminate standing water, to report mosquito bites to Vector control and to take action, like cleaning up accumulated debris that will reduce the numbers of mosquitoes and the risk that chikungunya might spread to Bermuda.

Madam President, in December of 2013, reports of chikungunya cases on the island of Saint Martin represented the first time that local transmission of the disease had been identified in the Caribbean. Additional cases have since been reported in at least fifteen other countries in the region and, as of last month, there have been almost 5,000 confirmed/probable cases logged.

Chikungunya symptoms usually begin three to seven days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. The most common symptoms are fever and severe joint pain, often in the hands and feet. Other symptoms may include headache, muscle pain, joint swelling, or rash.

Although most people recover from the acute illness within a week, there can be long-term health impacts such as joint pain. People at increased risk for severe disease include newborns, older adults (those older than 65 years), and people with medical conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart disease.

Deaths are rare, but no medication is currently available to cure the infection; only symptomatic treatment of the joint pain is available.

Madam President, if any member of the public experiences the symptoms of chikungunya, such as onset of fever, rash, arthritis, either locally, when travelling, or upon return after travelling, please see a doctor who can make the correct diagnosis. If you are sick with chikungunya, avoiding mosquito bites will help prevent further spread of the virus.

If you are being bitten by mosquitoes or know of mosquito breeding sites in your neighbourhood please call the Vector Control section on 278 5397 to report, or for further advice.

Madam President, *Aedes* mosquitoes are container breeding mosquitoes, meaning they do NOT breed in marshes or tall grass. Buckets, plant saucers, tires, fish ponds, bird baths, water tanks, wheelbarrows, trash cans, barrels, bromeliad plants and tree holes are breeding sites often found in Bermuda. Mosquito eggs require water in order to develop into adult mosquitoes, and it is important that everybody takes action to avoid water gathering in containers and to remove the containers or empty out standing water or add guppies to fish ponds.

Madam President, the Mosquito Control Regulations under the Public Health Act state that "Every person must maintain their property free from mosquitoes." The Vector Control Section of Environmental Health works diligently to monitor mosquitoes, educate the public and eliminate mosquito breeding sites. Controlling mosquito populations can be our first line of defence against chikungunya virus.

Thank you, **Madam President**.