

## Dengue hot spot gets extra attention

An environmental support assistant from the NEA spraying the living room of a private house along Simon Lane, in the Kovan area, with ultra-low-volume cold misting to fight dengue. The Government is paying particular attention to the area spanning Serangoon, Kovan and Hougang. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

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Resources focused on area covering Serangoon, Kovan and Hougang

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### DENGUE CLUSTERS AS OF JUNE 19

SOURCE: NEA

The authorities need to quickly get a handle on the dengue outbreak in Serangoon, Kovan and Hougang - where the mosquito-borne disease has spread widely - said Second Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Grace Fu yesterday.

The Government is paying particular attention to the area - the site of some of the largest clusters of dengue outbreaks in Singapore - to better understand mosquito breeding patterns and reduce the number of infections, she said.

"It's an important (area) for us to focus resources," she said while visiting the area, where she was briefed on progress by the National Environment Agency (NEA). "It's a big cluster and there are many cases."

The NEA has, since two weeks ago, stepped up its efforts by deploying 200 officers there each day - including at night and on weekends - to uncover and destroy breeding sites, and kill mosquitoes. They do this, for instance, by spraying insecticide, fogging, and using Gravitraps that lure and trap adult mosquitoes.

The 17 connected clusters are concentrated in an area which has historically been a dengue hot spot. So far, more than 650 people have been infected there this year. Four of the five largest clusters across the island are also located in this area.

A cluster is defined as an area where two or more infections take place within a fortnight and within 150m of each other.

It is still unclear why this specific area - stretching from Hougang Avenue 2 to Bartley Road and spanning about 6 sq km - is dengue central.

To date, the NEA has checked 11,000 homes and more than 100 other premises, uncovering 284 breeding sites. Two-thirds of these were in homes. Another 12 per cent were in areas managed by town councils, with 7 per cent in construction sites.

However, the diverse land-use patterns there make it a "difficult landscape" for NEA to manage, said Ms Fu, noting that the area has a large number of landed homes interspersed with condominiums, Housing Board blocks, shophouses and MRT stations.

This means more officers are needed for inspections.

Long-time Kovan resident Clement Franklin, 62, said that he, his wife and their three children have all contracted dengue in the past.

They have been lucky so far this year, but he urged the Government to find a permanent solution to the problem.

"Every year without fail, this area is a dengue hot spot," Mr Franklin, a trainee lawyer, said.

Across Singapore, more than 7,800 people have contracted dengue so far this year, and one person has died.

During last year's record epidemic, more than 22,000 were infected, and seven died.

Ms Fu, who is also Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, warned that with the weather growing warmer in the coming months, more mosquitoes will breed, since higher temperatures shorten their breeding cycle.

Reference: Ee, D. (2014, June 23). *Dengue hot spot gets extra attention*. Straits Times Online. Retrieved from <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/dengue-hot-spot-gets-extra-attention> on August 28, 2018.