

Date: Wednesday 9 February 2011

## DON'T TOUCH ROVE BEETLES

Murrumbidgee Local Health Network has warned a small beetle is causing increased skin irritation in the Southern Slopes.

Director of Public Health Tracey Oakman said General Practitioners and pharmacists in the region have reported increased numbers of people having contact with Rove Beetles over the past week.

The Rove Beetle is 7-8mm long with a black body and a distinct broad dark orange band towards the tail. It contains a poisonous toxin which is released when it is crushed such as when swatting it away.

“The toxin can cause reddening of the skin and a ‘burning’ sensation. This is followed by painful irritation and itching, with extensive pustules and blistering of the skin after four days,” said Ms Oakman.

“Unfortunately the toxin can easily spread from the point of contact to other areas of the body so it’s important to wash the area with soapy water to prevent spreading the toxin,” she said.

“People can then use a cold compress, antihistamines, or apply Aloe Vera to alleviate the symptoms.”

“Secondary infections may occur in blistered areas, if concerned please see your local doctor,” Mrs Oakman added.

The beetles are thought to be increasing following recent rains. They remain on the ground during the day and at night will fly toward any nearby light source.

People living in areas known to have Rove Beetles are advised:

- Do not touch the beetles
- If they land on you, blow or wash them off your skin
- Minimise lighting in infested areas at night
- Wear long-sleeved and long-legged clothing to reduce exposure
- Keep insect screens closed on tents to keep the beetle out of bedding

Ms Oakman said changing light sources to red or yellow can reduce their attraction. Otherwise a bright diversionary light can be installed away from entrances or outdoor seating to draw them away. A light scatter of granular bifenthrin (marketed as Mortien Ant Sand, Brigade, Bithor or Vigilanti) at the base of the diversionary light would then reduce local numbers of the beetle.

Home owners should reduce exterior lighting, close curtains and spray a residual pesticide around exterior door frames.

**Ends**

**Media note: For interviews phone Tracey Oakman on mobile 0429 378 845.**