

Rome sets mosquito campaign after chikungunya cases

September 13 2017

The city of Rome on Wednesday announced it would carry out a fast-track anti-mosquito campaign after a string of suspected cases of the insect-borne chikungunya virus were detected in the region.

The move was criticised as too late by the national minister of health, who added it was likely that blood donations in Rome may have to be halted to help stop transmission of the [disease](#).

In a statement, city hall said disinfection and other anti-mosquito measures would be carried out "in all urban areas where clinical [cases](#) (of chikungunya) have been notified by the local health authorities," known by the initials of ASL.

Chikungunya, first identified in Tanzania in 1952, is a painful joint disease transmitted by two species of mosquito.

It causes [high fever](#), nausea, headaches and extreme fatigue, but is generally non-fatal and most patients recover. Its name comes from Swahili for "that which bends up," for it leaves victims stooped.

The viral disease is endemic in Africa and south Asia and has been moving westwards, where it now occurs in Latin America, and north, towards Europe, where the authorities are striving to prevent it from become established.

Seventeen cases of the disease have been recorded in recent days in

Italy's Latium region that includes Rome, including six in the capital itself, according to the regional service for infectious disease surveillance (Seresmi).

Most of the cases have been people who live, or have stayed, in the Anzio district 50 kilometres (30 miles) from Rome, a cluster which strengthens suspicions that the source was local.

Italian Health Minister Beatrice Lorenzin said that Wednesday's announcement by city hall was too late.

"Too much time has elapsed since the ASL asked for intervention," Lorenzin said. The ASL filed the request on September 7.

Lorenzin also said a decision on halting [blood donations](#) in Rome was "very likely."

The two species that can carry chikungunya are the yellow fever mosquito (*Aedes aegypti*) and the tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*). Both are able to carry [dengue fever](#) as well as the yellow fever virus.

Ten years ago, more than 200 cases of chikungunya were found in the northeastern Italian region of Emilia Romagna. The initial source is believed to be a man who had arrived in the area from Kerala, India, where the infection took place.

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