

Desperate to dodge dengue, Argentines run out of repellent

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Insect repellent has become a hot commodity in Argentina, which is besieged by dengue-carrying mosquitoes and facing shortages that have sparked supermarket brawls, rations and homemade concoctions.

The country is one of the worst hit by an outbreak of [dengue](#) sweeping Latin America and the Caribbean, attributed to a muggy summer that has been intensified by the El Niño climate phenomenon.

The outbreak in the middle of an economic crisis, in a country with strict importation controls, has led to a severe shortage of mosquito repellents.

Some businesses have opened dedicated WhatsApp channels to tell clients when they get some in. Others impose rations of three products per person.

In one viral video, a man appears in a park surrounded by a cloud of mosquitos, explaining how a mixture of water and low-cost local shampoo brand Plusbelle repels the flying pests.

"I did everything homemade," said Laura Di Costa, 56, who was unable to find repellent and ended up in the hospital with dengue, which causes joint and bone pain, earning it the nickname "breakbone fever."

Dengue can provoke [hemorrhagic fever](#) in severe cases, and death.

"I try not to go out much, I don't take my grandchildren to the park so as not to be in the grass," added Di Costa.

With 129 deaths so far this year, Argentina has seen a ten-fold increase compared to the same period last year, according to official figures.

Brazil has seen an 81 percent increase in cases, the biggest in the region, according to the Pan American Health Organization, which has recorded 3.5 million cases—triple what was seen in 2023.

"Probably this will be the worst dengue season (in the region)," said Jarbas Barbosa, director of the Pan American Health Organization.

After facing criticism from the opposition for its "absence" amid the crisis, Libertarian President Javier Milei's government this week removed importation taxes on mosquito repellents.

In the meantime, sprays and creams are selling for around \$40 apiece, rather than the usual \$5, a painful sum for a population already dealing with annual inflation of 276 percent.

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