

NICD confirms mango fly maggot infestation in North West province

The National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) has confirmed an outbreak of maggot (tumbu fly) infestation in people in the North West province and increased sporadic cases in Gauteng.

“Our laboratory has confirmed that the maggots are those of the tumbu fly (also known as the mango’ or ‘putsi’ fly). The increase in the number of cases is most likely related to the recent marked increase in seasonal rainfall, leading to the expansion of the fly’s normal range, namely the warmer northern and eastern parts of the country,” said the NICD.

According to the NICD, infection occurs when the adult female tumbu fly deposits eggs usually on urine or faeces-contaminated sand, soil or clothing. The maggots hatch and on contact with skin, penetrate and cause enlarging boil-like skin lesions, each with a small opening at the apex through which the larva breathes.

“The lesions may be complicated by secondary bacterial infection. The condition is readily treated by applying petroleum jelly (Vaseline) or liquid paraffin to the lesions, to suffocate the maggots and lubricate the cavity in the skin; usually, they then emerge or are easily expressed with finger pressure.

“Incision or use of forceps or other instruments is unnecessary and should be avoided, as inflammation or secondary infection is more likely if the larva and/or skin is damaged. Domestic dogs and rodents are commonly affected, sometimes with large numbers of lesions,” said the NICD.

Infestation prevention measures

- Washing should not be laid on the ground to dry.
- Ironing clothes kills eggs or larvae.
- Affected dogs should be dipped in an appropriate insecticide solution for prevention of tick or flea infestation, under veterinary guidance.

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