

Ross River Virus not a threat

THERE was no immediate threat of northern Victoria flood waters causing an outbreak of mosquito-borne diseases such as Ross River Virus, the Health and Community Services Department has advised.

H&CS public health director, Dr Chris Brook, said conditions in the flood area were currently not conducive to mosquito breeding.

"There are mosquitos in the area, but they are not the species that carry diseases," Dr Brook said.

"At present the water temperature is too cold for the mosquito species that carries Ross River Virus to breed."

Ross River Virus can cause severe aches and pains for up to a month, a rash, lethargy and headaches. Joint pains sometimes fade and return weeks later, persisting for a year or more.

Dr Brook said the department's Victorian Arbovirus Taskforce - which advises on the control of mosquito-borne diseases - would continue to monitor the situation in the flood areas.

"However, in view of the flood situation, the mosquito monitoring pro-

gram will begin this month - two weeks earlier than usual. Additional funding will be provided by the public health branch," Dr Brook said.

Arbovirus Taskforce chairman, Dr Noel Bennett, said the taskforce had consulted with Local Government environmental health officers regarding mosquito breeding and water levels.

"As the weather gets warmer, the Arbovirus Taskforce will continue to monitor the situation, as we do every year, to ensure that the proper mosquito control programs are in place," Dr Bennett said.

Dr Bennett said people in mosquito-prone areas should eliminate breeding sites close to the home, such as pools of water, fit insect screens to doors and windows, cover exposed parts of the body and use insect repellent.

Farmers can help eliminate breeding sites by providing proper drainage on their property and using irrigation water efficiently. Anyone with inquiries can contact H&CS's Communicable Diseases Unit on (03) 616 7164.



Floodbound ... Graham Hancock, holding Joel, and wife Lauren at their Lower Loddon residence.

Hygiene danger claims floodbound farmer

By GREY MORRIS

CONSTANT rain in the region that reached its peak early last week when more than 60 mm of rain fell, has left a Lower Loddon family with more water than it can handle.

The Hancock family purchased a residence

on Weir road, about 5 km north of Kerang, in May 1990 and has been inundated with water during two of the three years.

Graham Hancock, his wife Lauren and their two sons, Travis, 7, and Joel, 4, have had to experience a number of

hygiene problems in that time and are unhappy with the response to date from the Shire of Kerang.

"When I purchased the property in 1990 I was advised by the shire's building inspector that the house would only incur some seepage water and was in no danger of being flooded," Mr Hancock said.

He said flooding had spread under the house, in the front and rear yard, driveway, garage and had rendered the septic toilet system inoperative.

The flooding often takes up to six weeks to completely disperse, during which time the sanitary system is inoperative for at least three weeks.

Mr Hancock said he had asked the shire on numerous occasions to find a solution to the poor drainage problem at his house and nearby neighbors, only to meet with a negative response.

Miss Emily Maudsley, whose home is experiencing similar drainage problems, has fully endorsed Mr Hancock's comments on the drainage problem.

"My septic tank has been submerged for at least a week and the smell in my house is not pleasant. How Graham and Lauren are coping with two small children I don't know," she said.

The solution, according to Mr Hancock, is to construct a drain from Weir road to the Loddon River, where water would then be pumped via a sump to the river.

He said landholders in the area had to rely on a tractor driven pump to disperse the water to the river at present - a process that has proved

costly and ineffective.

"An automatic electric level pump could be erected at the sump site, of which the cost of the pump and accompanying mount we would be prepared to cover between us, while the shire paid for excavation work and power connections," he said.

Mr Hancock believes the cost of establishing the pump and the subsequent excavation work would be far less than a figure of \$33,000 for drainage works that resulted from a shire survey some years ago.

Mr Hancock believes the majority of water that accumulates around his property is a by-product of drainage water from the nearby Weir road. The water is transferred to the river side via a drainage pipe under the road.

Kerang Shire Council's planning and works committee and shire engineer, Mr Peter McDonald, will inspect Mr Hancock's property at 11 am next Tuesday.

Cr Jim Whelan proposed that the committee inspect Mr Hancock's property prior to the committee's November 1 meeting to make an appraisal.



Shire's new C takes oath

KERANG Shire Council's new member, Cr Angel, was sworn in during the shire's ordinary meeting on Tuesday.

Cr Angel won the shire's extraordinary election on October 11, replacing Cr Jim Whelan.

The municipal councillor was forced to hold an extraordinary election after failing to receive any nominations for the vacant seat created by former councillor, Mr Jim English, at the annual Local Government elections in August.

"I think I'll work well with the other councillors," Cr Angel said after participating in her first council session.

Cr Angel said she was pleased to have been elected and would endeavor to serve all shire ratepayers to the best of her ability.

"I'm looking forward to a challenging time ahead on council," she said.

A former school teacher, Mrs Angel and her husband operate an irrigation dairy farm near Kerang.

A member of the Victorian Farmers Federation, Kerang district Irrigators League and the Holstein Friesian Club of Victoria, she is interested in the shire and the health, welfare, economic and future of its residents.

Tourism remnant

A BOTANICAL survey of the Shire of Gordon could result in a boost to the district's tourism prospects as well as improving the local community's awareness of remnant vegetation.

Gordon Shire Council has secured a \$15,000 Federal Government grant through the "Save the Bush Fund" to identify and list remnant vegetation in the shire.

It will contribute to the project by arranging transport, accommodation and administrative assistance.

The shire hopes the project will make people aware of the importance of remnant vegetation. It believes spin-offs may include a boost in local tourism and possibly the publication of a book about the area.

Botanist, Mr John Westaway, will conduct the 14 week study, which began two weeks ago. Mr Westaway studied biological science at La Trobe University in Melbourne and for the past four years has undertaken botanical surveys throughout Victoria for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

During the project, Mr Westaway's primary role will be to conduct a floristic inventory of remnant vegetation throughout the shire on public and private land and to make recommendations for each site's future management.

He will conduct field work, visit the Melbourne herbarium to accurately identify plants and place final information on the DGNR's flora database.

Botanist John Westaway

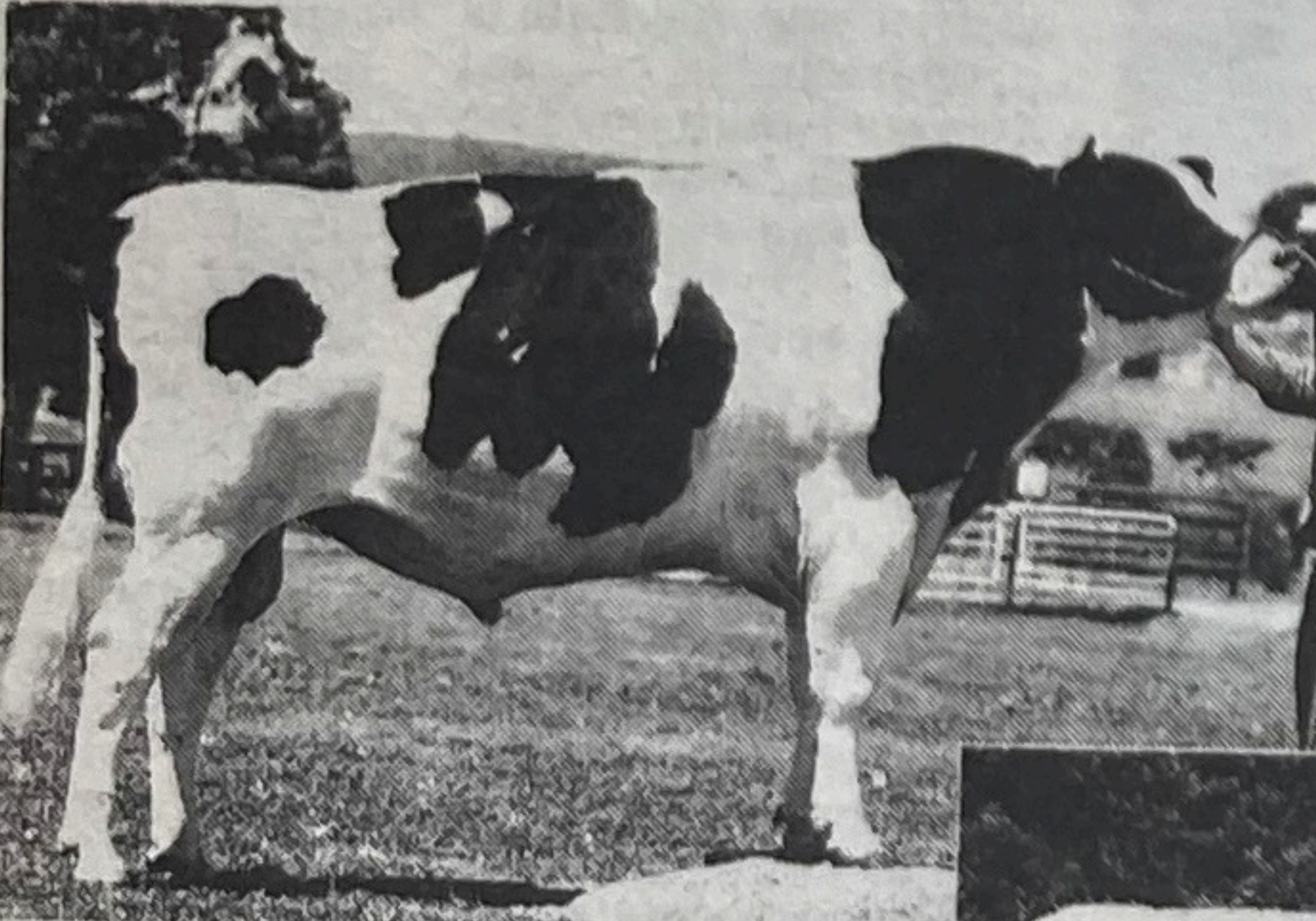
Forest this week. Mr Westaway will spend some time to schools, clubs, groups or individuals about the importance of the remnant vegetation.

So far he has been working in the south west of Victoria, where he has been conducting surveys on roadsides, valuable vegetation and riparian areas.

Mr Westaway said the information he will be providing will be of benefit to the community.

He believes the value of the remnant vegetation is being recognized.

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