



WATER SKIER SAFETY – AUSTRALIAN PLAGUE LOCUST SWARMS

SITUATION

Since autumn 2008, 1.25 million hectares of northern Victoria has been affected by an outbreak of Australian Plague Locusts. The affected area is bounded by a line from Bendigo to Wangaratta and north to the Murray River. The highest densities of locusts have been recorded in the irrigation region north of Shepparton and since December 2008 in the Echuca area.. Significant locust infestations have also occurred in the southern NSW and Riverina regions.

The Victorian Department of Primary Industries is managing the response to the current locust outbreak and warns water skiers that they may encounter flying adult locusts while driving to, or competing in the Southern80 Water Ski Race over the period 6th – 9th February 2009. These locusts may occur singly, or in small or large swarms.

Current infestations of locusts in some parts of northern Victoria and southern NSW will be maturing shortly and there is a high potential these locusts may swarm and be present around Torrumbarry, Moama and anywhere along the Murray River over the Southern80 weekend; subject to weather conditions*.

WATER SKIER SAFETY TIPS

Australian Plague Locusts may present a substantial safety risk to skiers competing at the Southern80 event; particularly to any uncovered parts of the body.

Adult locusts have a significant amount of body fat and on impact will leave a residue of body parts and fat.

Serious damage to skiers' eyesight may result if appropriate protective clothing and helmets/head gear are not worn. Furthermore, if encountered while skiing at high-speed, locusts can significantly reduce a competitor's ability to see the river, its banks, trees or submerged logs, etc.

The Department of Primary Industries and the Moama Water Sports Club Inc. have developed some tips for skiers to help them prepare for their event(s) at this year's competition:

How to prepare for your event:

- Wear long-length quality ski suits and helmets WITH visors
- Alternatively, goggles should be worn or at the very least apply sports strapping tape to any exposed parts of the body
- Get an update on the locust threat from race officials well in advance of your event
- Visit the locust-affected area of the river to assess the situation for yourself
- Decide what you will do if you encounter locusts during your race(s) – continue or bail out?



- Ensure your kit contains some specially formulated insect cleaning agent to clean your ski suit and head gear (available at supermarkets, auto accessory outlets and service stations.)

By taking these precautionary safety steps, skiers can significantly improve their safety while competing in the Southern80 2009.

For more information or help, contact:

- DPI's Locust Hotline: 1300 13 5559 or visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au/locusts
- MWSC secretary@southern80.com.au or visit www.southern80.com.au/

*Subject to weather conditions: Flight paths of Australian Plague Locust swarms always follow strong wind direction. If there is a strong northerly wind direction leading up to and during the period of the event, it is more likely that swarms from NSW will reach the area. On calm (low-wind) days, locusts will fly in any direction.

While locust swarms rarely migrate en masse through well vegetated areas such as heavily treed river banks, they will nonetheless break into smaller swarms to fly through areas with dense vegetation.

If you would like to receive this information/publication in an accessible format (such as large print or audio) please call the Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

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Developed in conjunction with the Moama Water Sports Club Incorporated (MWSC).

