

Waikato Public Health Bulletin

Public Health Service - Waikato

Poutūterangi 2026 | March 2026

Tēnā koutou katoa. We hope you enjoy this edition of the Waikato Public Health Bulletin and we welcome your feedback. The bulletin is written for GPs and colleagues in primary & community care.

In this month's bulletin:

1. **Dengue fever**
2. **Eating from the Whenua**
3. **He Ara Whakamua**
4. **Staff News**
5. **Notifiable Disease Trends**

Dengue Fever

There are ongoing dengue fever outbreaks across the Pacific Region, and New Zealand is seeing high numbers of imported cases following increased summer travel – most commonly from people who recently visited the Cook Islands.

Please advise people travelling to the Pacific to protect themselves from mosquitoes and of the risk of dengue. If they have previously had dengue, they are at increased risk of dengue haemorrhagic fever.

Please remain vigilant for recent travellers who may present with symptoms of dengue. Notification of dengue should be made to the local medical officer of health.

Transmission

Dengue fever is not spread from person to person. People become infected with the dengue virus after being bitten by an infected mosquito in an area or region that has dengue. There is no available vaccine in New Zealand.

Advice for people travelling to the Pacific

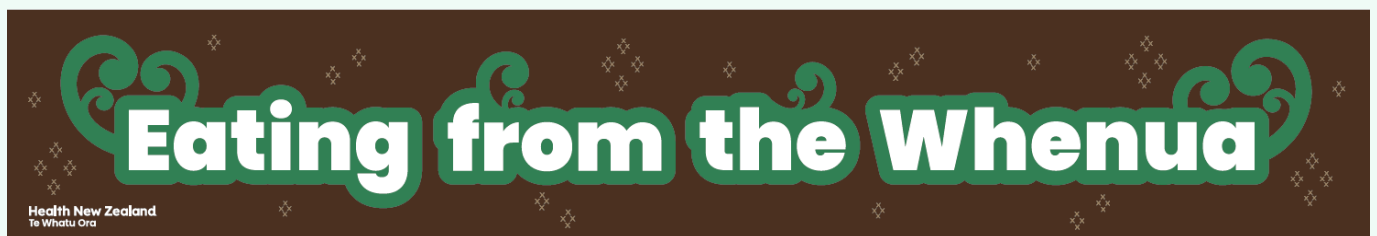
- Please advise travellers to the Pacific to protect themselves from mosquito bites.
- DEET is the best repellent for preventing bites from mosquitoes which carry dengue and other mosquito borne illnesses. Recommended concentrations are 20% - 50% for adults and 20% - 30% for children over 2 months old.
- Other ways to prevent being bitten by mosquitos include wearing light coloured protective clothing, including, hats, long sleeves and trousers when outdoors; staying or sleeping in well screened locations, or under mosquito nets; getting rid of or staying away from standing water.
- Travellers should contact their GP, Hauora Māori, Pacific provider or Healthline if they develop fever or other symptoms after returning to NZ. If they develop symptoms while visiting the Pacific, they are encouraged to seek healthcare locally.
- Further information about dengue can be found [here](#), and guidance on how to stay healthy when travelling is available [here](#).
- Additional travel advice is available at www.safetravel.govt.nz/destinations
- For advice on visiting regions overseas with dengue visit: [Dengue fever outbreak in the Pacific and Southeast Asia regions](#)

Further Information

Please follow HealthPathways advice for Fever in Returning Travellers and see Dengue Fever for symptoms and warning signs of severe dengue.

Eating from the Whenua - Taumarunui Hāpori Hauora Day

On Saturday 28th February 2026, the Hauora Day event welcomed health services and providers to connect with the Taumarunui community providing a one-stop shop for whānau to access health services. The Community Whanau Wellbeing Team were lucky enough to be invited to have a health promotion stand at this event, and this year we launched “*Eating from the Whenua*”. Whānau were invited to make themselves a salad, share kōrero about growing kai, take seedlings/mesh fabric bags and seeds to make a portable māra. The aim was a strengths-based approach to raising interest in trying different kai, and to demonstrate how easy growing kai can be, even with limited garden space and finance. Fundamentally, if people eat kai from the whenua, this not only builds food sovereignty, but also strengthens the health of people and the planet. We also took the opportunity to highlight the ‘Nurture the Future Within’ campaign, aimed at raising awareness of foetal alcohol syndrome. There was kōrero about FASD and whānau were given koha of resources and a temporary tattoo.



He Ara Whakamua – Rise Up: Improving Mental Wellbeing Through Physical Activity

He Ara Whakamua - Rise Up is a kaupapa-driven mental wellbeing programme delivered by King Country Lee Gar, a community-based gym in Taumarunui operating to improve hauora outcomes through accessible martial arts, strength training, and youth development initiatives. Established to remove barriers to participation in rural communities, King Country Lee Gar exists to provide a safe, structured environment where tamariki and rangatahi can build discipline, resilience, and confidence.

Currently embedded in 11 schools, He Ara Whakamua reaches over 300+ students each week. Through structured kickboxing, strength and conditioning, and values-based learning, the programme supports emotional regulation, leadership development, and positive behavioural change. It directly addresses bullying, disengagement, and sedentary lifestyles while strengthening identity and belonging.

The programme is also expanding cross-agency collaboration, with active discussions alongside Oranga Tamariki to support tamariki and rangatahi in state care, and engagement with Ministry of Social Development to create pathways for rangatahi receiving Jobseeker Support or Youth Allowance.

He Ara Whakamua operates under a one-term contract through Central King Country REAP, with performance assessed each term. Despite short-term funding, the programme has already:

- Created paid employment for two rangatahi
- Created paid roles for one coach and one facilitator
- Established four high school internships
- Strengthened youth leadership pathways within the community

He Ara Whakamua - Rise Up is more than a programme. It is a preventative public health intervention, a workforce development pathway, and a scalable rural model for improving mental wellbeing through physical activity.



Staff News

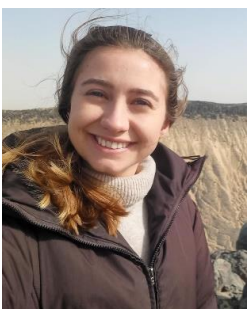


Photo: Xenia Berger

Xenia Berger is a final year medical student from the University of Auckland who has joined the Waikato Public Health Service. She is looking forward to learning about public health during her elective placement over the next month. She is keen to join kaimahi and observe and experience the variety of mahi that occurs in this space. Haere mai!

Medical Officers of Health (MOoH)

Dr Felicity Dumble, Dr Kate Meerkerk, Dr Richard Wall, Dr Kaitlin Greenway, Dr Geoff Cramp

After Hours:

MOoH: 021 359 650 HPO: 021 999 521

If there is no answer, please contact Waikato Hospital's switchboard 07 839 8899 and ask for the on-call MOoH.

During Office Hours:

Public Health (MOoH or HPO): (07) 838 2569 Notifications: 07 838 2569 ext. 22041 or 22020

Notifications outside Hamilton: 0800 800 977 Fax: 07 838 2382

Email: WK-Nphsnotifiablediseases@TeWhatuora.govt.nz

Please call the public health unit before sending off swabs for notifiable diseases so that public health can obtain a history prior to receiving a lab notification. If notifying via BPAC, please fill out all fields on the form (in particular for pertussis, whether anyone in the household is pregnant or age under 1 year old).

Notifiable Diseases – Trends

Please note: The numbers for “cases per month” include those under investigation at the time this report is generated. These may or may not eventually become a confirmed case of the notifiable disease.

Notifiable diseases (Waikato District) - period to: March 2026

*Stats NZ estimated 8.69% of the population resided in Waikato in 2021

Disease name	Waikato cases per month			Cases per month over the last year (mean)		
	January	February	Trend	Waikato	National	% Waikato*
Botulism	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Brucellosis	0	0	-	0.0	0.1	0
Campylobacteriosis	60	44	▼	49.0	471.2	10
COVID-19	102	122	▲	155.8	1,837.0	8
Cryptosporidiosis	2	2	-	10.7	72.2	15
Decompression sickness	0	0	-	0.0	0.2	0
Dengue fever	7	17	▲	3.9	53.9	7
Diphtheria	2	0	▼	0.1	0.4	25
Gastroenteritis - unknown cause	1	0	▼	1.9	20.5	9
Gastroenteritis / foodborne intoxication	10	5	▼	6.7	20.4	33
Giardiasis	12	13	▲	10.5	70.9	15
Haemophilus influenzae type b	0	0	-	0.0	0.2	0
Hepatitis A	0	0	-	0.6	4.2	14
Hepatitis B	2	0	▼	0.3	1.5	20
Hepatitis C	7	3	▼	0.8	2.5	32
Hepatitis NOS	0	0	-	0.0	0.2	0
Hydatid disease	0	0	-	0.0	0.4	0
Invasive group A streptococcal infection	14	10	▼	5.4	52.8	10
Invasive pneumococcal disease	8	2	▼	5.6	57.4	10
Latent tuberculosis infection	3	10	▲	3.1	8.2	38
Legionellosis	1	2	▲	1.8	13.8	13
Leprosy	0	0	-	0.0	0.3	0
Leptospirosis	1	3	▲	1.5	6.2	24
Listeriosis	0	1	▲	0.2	3.1	6
Listeriosis - perinatal	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Malaria	0	1	▲	0.3	4.1	7
Measles	0	0	-	0.1	5.1	2
Meningococcal disease	0	0	-	0.1	3.4	3
Mumps	0	1	▲	0.3	1.0	30
Murine Typhus	0	0	-	0.0	0.4	0
Pertussis	38	17	▼	16.8	191.9	9
Q fever	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Rheumatic fever - initial attack	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Rheumatic fever - recurrent attack	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Salmonellosis	6	5	▼	7.6	93.3	8
Shigellosis	1	0	▼	0.8	14.3	6
Taeniasis	0	0	-	0.0	0.3	0
Tetanus	0	0	-	0.0	0.1	0
Tuberculosis disease - new case	5	2	▼	3.8	33.4	11
Tuberculosis disease - relapse or reactivation	0	0	-	0.1	0.9	11
Tuberculosis infection - on preventive treatment	1	0	▼	0.3	0.3	100
Typhoid fever	0	0	-	0.4	4.5	9
VTEC/STEC infection	11	3	▼	14.3	98.8	14
Yersiniosis	9	5	▼	6.2	91.3	7

We will make changes to this table from the April newsletter. If you depend on this for reporting purposes, please email katherine.sung@tewhatauora.health.nz