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Ministries on disease alert

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THE Ministry of Health is keeping a close watch on the outbreak of diseases after the flooding brought by Cyclone Mick.

Deputy Secretary of Public Health, Dr Joe Koroivueta, said there was a possibility of disease outbreaks such as typhoid, dengue fever, diarrhoea and leptospirosis.

"So far we have not seen any increase in diseases," he said.

He said the ministry's main priority was Navua Hospital and Lautoka Hospital's maternal and child care unit.

"There is no water and no electricity supply at the hospital," he said.

Dr Koroivueta said disease outbreaks were expected after massive flooding.

The ministry has also advised the public to ensure that food is kept in a safe place.

"Wear protective gear when working in farms or piggeries to stop the likelihood of getting leptospirosis," the ministry said.

People have also been advised against buying food from supermarkets that has not been kept properly.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture is calling on people in flooded areas to take extra precautions as leptospirosis can be passed from animals to humans.

"The floodwaters coming in from the interior and mountains where the feral pigs live will bring in the leptospira bacteria (spirochaete) down to the farming areas," said Shiu Chand, Director Animal Health and Production at the ministry.

He said the bacteria loved stagnant water and the ministry was pleading to farming communities and members of the public to take care.

"Animals have to be kept away from flood affected areas for at least seven days after the floodwaters have receded," he said.