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HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

22 August 2003

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information regarding potential strategic or tactical impact to the US Army and as such, should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available at <http://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil/>. The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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HOT TOPICS

Antibacterial Cleaning, Hygiene Products an Emerging Risk Factor for Antibiotic Resistance in the Community

01 August – The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal reported [antibiotic resistance](#) within the community setting is an emerging public-health concern. Infection with antibiotic-resistant organisms in the community among people lacking traditional risk factors has been reported. In addition, prevalence studies have identified individuals carrying antibiotic-resistant organisms in the absence of known risk factors. These studies strongly suggest the presence of contributing factors that have yet to be identified. This paper reviews the burden of antibiotic resistance and known risk factors within the community setting, assess the potential role of antibacterial cleaning and hygiene products containing triclosan in the emergence of resistance, and recommends future research on the assessment of household cleaning and hygiene products containing triclosan. [View Article](#)

Australian Virus May Provide Anti-West Nile Immunization: Study

11 August – Yahoo News reported a virus found in Australia may serve as the basis for a vaccination that protects against West Nile virus. [Kunjin virus](#) (KUN), similar in genetic sequence to the New York strain of [West Nile virus](#), was found to produce mild symptoms only in very rare cases, according to a study by the Proceedings of the National Academies of Sciences. Scientists injected mice with various doses of Kunjin DNA, after using a weakened strain of KUN. Researchers found after 19 days, the blood serum of the mice contained antibodies against Kunjin virus and West Nile virus. The mice, inoculated with a fatal dose of West Nile virus, survived after receiving Kunjin DNA, according to the study. Kunjin is a member of the Flavivirus family, responsible for an encephalitic syndrome found in Australia and Thailand. [View Article](#)

CDC Cautions against Confusing Viral Meningitis with West Nile

18 August – CNN News reported federal officials are cautioning doctors and other health workers not to confuse [West Nile virus](#) and a mild illness commonly known as [viral meningitis](#) that has appeared this

summer in outbreaks across the country. Seven states -- Arizona, California, Georgia, Idaho, Oregon, South Carolina and Texas -- have reported an unusually high number of viral meningitis cases this year. About 20 other states also have reported cases of the mild viral disease, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in its journal Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Symptoms for both West Nile virus and viral meningitis can include fever, sensitivity to light and a stiff or sore neck. West Nile virus tends to affect older people, and viral meningitis strikes children or young adults. [View Article](#)

Diabetes on the Increase but Death Rate Falling

15 August – Reuters reported [diabetes](#) is rising in the rich world but the death rate from it is falling due to early detection and better treatment, scientists said in a study published last week. Researchers from the University of Southern Denmark carried out an analysis of diabetes in a community of 470,000 people between 1993 and 1999. While the proportion of people with diabetes increased by around three percent annually during the six-year study, the associated death rate fell three percent each year. [View Article](#)

Inflammation May Be Culprit in Osteoarthritis

08 August – Health Day News reported British scientists found that nearly one-third of patients ready to undergo joint replacement surgery for [osteoarthritis](#) (OA) had severe inflammation in the synovial fluid that surrounds and protects the joints. This inflammation, already known to cause rheumatoid arthritis, could be a contributing factor in osteoarthritis as well, the researchers suggest. "Many people with early osteoarthritis have few symptoms, and understanding the role of inflammation in OA may enable markers of inflammation to be used to help decide whether someone with early OA should be offered treatment or not," says study co-author David A. Walsh, a senior lecturer in rheumatology at the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom. The finding appears in the August issue of Arthritis & Rheumatism. [View Article](#)

Smallpox Vaccine's Protection May Last Decades

17 August – The Washington Post reported many of the 120 million Americans who were vaccinated against [smallpox](#) more than 30 years ago may still have enough immunity against the disease to protect them from fatal infection, should the virus ever be used as a biological weapon. That is the conclusion of a study that examined the immune systems of more than 100 people immunized against smallpox before 1972, when that vaccination ceased being routine for U.S. children. The findings suggest the United States may be less vulnerable than previously believed to the worst-case bioterrorism scenario -- intentional release of the smallpox virus. [View Article](#)

Study Suggests Hygiene Important in Controlling SARS

18 August – VOA News reported the world continues to see new infections for which there are no vaccines. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome is just one of the latest examples, but these diseases are still vulnerable to simple control measures. A new study has found the most deadly enemies of these infections are soap, masks, gowns, and gloves. Earlier this year, medical workers, scientists, politicians and donors around the world battled to stop the spread of the [SARS](#) virus. University of California researcher James Lloyd-Smith and colleagues used mathematics formulas to search for the most effective ways to halt the SARS epidemic. They found that protective clothing and hand washing in the hospital are the most important weapons in fighting SARS and other contagious diseases. [View Article](#)

West Nile Monkey Vaccine Shows Promise

18 August – ABC News reported a vaccine that combines key parts of two viruses has been shown to protect monkeys from [West Nile virus](#), a mosquito-borne illness that has killed 10 Americans this year.

Scientists at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) made the vaccine by placing West Nile virus proteins into a modified virus that causes dengue fever. This created a live but weakened virus. When injected into monkeys, the hybrid virus protected the animals from injected doses of West Nile virus. The researchers said the combined viruses crippled the West Nile virus but still caused a strong immune response against it. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Britain Urged to Test Immigrants for HIV

18 August – Reuters reported Britain should test would-be immigrants for [HIV](#) to stem a rise in the number of cases being imported from Africa, campaigners for stricter border controls said. Immigrant support groups rejected the calls and the opposition Liberal Democrats, the third force in British politics, said testing would be unethical and unworkable. Figures from the government's Health Protection Agency (HPA) show 90 percent of all people diagnosed with HIV in Britain but who contracted it abroad contracted it in Africa. [View Article](#)

Diarrheal Disease in Africa

15 August – ProMed reported a WHO team composed of an epidemiologist, an expert on [cholera](#) from the Cholera Task Force, and a water and sanitation engineer are supporting the WHO country office in the surveillance and control of communicable diseases in Liberia. The mission is a joint response, carried out in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Africa. A major concern is the ongoing outbreak of cholera in Monrovia which to date has led to 1,944 cases and 17 deaths. In Uganda, as of the end of July, there have been 93 cases of cholera, 1,170 cases of [dysentery](#) and 304 cases of typhoid with 2 deaths. In the Central African Republic (CAR) a joint medical team of government and NGO officials is in the northern town of Bocaranga, to investigate cases of a diarrheal disease detected by local health services in early July. Bocaranga, a town of some 15,000 people, is in an area that was badly affected by the fighting between government and rebel troops from Oct 2002 to Mar 2003. Humanitarian NGOs have been calling on the government to send qualified medical personnel to the north, where nurses are reportedly running hospitals. The outbreak of diarrhea was reported just days after the International Committee of Red Cross announced a USD 2.2 million water program for towns facing shortages of clean water. [View Report](#)

France Says Heat Wave Kills 3,000

14 August – Reuters reported France's blistering heat wave has killed some 3,000 people in three weeks, health officials said, describing the death rate as an epidemic. The government, which had been criticized for failing to act fast enough over the crisis, imposed emergency measures to recall medical staff from holidays as hospitals struggled to cope with floods of casualties, mainly old people. Hospitals set up refrigerated tents to house patients with heat-related conditions, such as hyperthermia and dehydration. The national health authority said the death toll of 3,000 included those killed directly or indirectly as a result of the heat wave since July 25 and was based on extrapolation from figures for Paris. [View Article](#)

Legionnaires Outbreaks in Europe

17 August – ProMed reported 30 cases and 3 deaths from [Legionella](#) have been reported by health officials from Hérault district, Montpellier and from the European Working Group for Legionella Infections. The last case was reported on 10 Aug 2003. Environmental investigators have identified the presence of legionella in several cooling towers in the center of Montpellier. Disinfection measures have been taken

and analysis is continuing to identify the precise source of the outbreak. [View Report](#) 12 August - ProMed reported cases of legionella make headlines in Norway. 10 women were probably infected with the legionella bacteria after a bachelorette party in Nesodden, Akershus ended up in a bubbling hot tub. The women learned after visits to doctors that the site of their festive bath had been shut down in June 2003 after 3 elderly women fell ill there. Chief district physician Knut Erlend Hagen believes the 10 celebrants have contracted Pontiac fever, a milder version of legionella infection. This ailment tends to last a few days but can become dangerous if it develops into pneumonia. Cases of legionella infection are commoner in the summer months; 3 cases have been reported in the Trondheim and Oslo area.

[View Report](#)

Outbreak of Tularamia in Sweden

17 August – ProMed reported Between 1 Jul and 11 Aug, 109 cases of [tularemia](#) (*Francisella tularensis* var *holarctica*) were reported to the Swedish Institute of Infectious Diseases 60 per cent of cases are men and most of the cases have been people of active working age. Typically, most cases are clustered tightly by geography. The ulceroglandular form of the disease dominates, with most cases reporting a mosquito or tick bite at the site of the ulcer and subsequent lymphadenopathy. This is consistent with the presentation during previous years in Sweden. This year, a few clusters with respiratory disease probably due to inhalational exposure have also been reported. These cases are typically in farmers, with onset of disease within a few days of working with hay. Similar inhalational exposure of farmers has been reported in previous outbreaks in Sweden and Finland. The early start of tularemia notifications together with the rapid increase in number of notifications during the first weeks suggest an epidemic year in Sweden. [View Report](#)

Uganda: TB Cases Shoot Up in Kasese

18 August – AllAfrica.com reported health workers in Kasese district have reported an increase in [tuberculosis \(TB\)](#) cases in the area in the last six months. "We have registered more than 400 new TB cases since January indicating a sharp increase in our records," the district TB and Leprosy supervisor Erieza Bitheyo said recently at a community based TB workshop. He said this may be the highest number of tuberculosis cases ever recorded in the district, over a similar period. [View Article](#)

Yellow Fever Outbreak Reported in Sierra Leone

19 August – ProMed reported the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Sierra Leone has reported one confirmed case and 45 suspected cases of [yellow fever](#) in Tonkolili district. A joint investigation mission from the Ministry, WHO and UNICEF took place 7-10 Aug 2003 and samples collected on site are undergoing laboratory testing. Surveillance has been strengthened in the affected areas and plans are in place for an immunization campaign to begin this week. The Ministry has an available stock of yellow fever vaccine to cover the affected population. Additional samples from surrounding districts are also being collected for testing. [View Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Afghans Seek Relief in Drugs

07 August – BBC News reported the first ever assessment of [drug usage](#) in the Afghan capital Kabul has shown that heroin, opium, alcohol and pharmaceutical drugs are being used by thousands of people across the city. The assessment, made by the United Nations, also shows that many returning refugees and women are among the drug users. The findings were based on interviews with 200 drug users and with 100 specialists, such as doctors, health workers and police. The final report concludes there are at least 24,000 hashish users, nearly 11,000 opium users and 7,000 heroin users in the Afghan capital, as

well as nearly 7,000 who drink alcohol. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime emphasizes that these are minimum estimates and that actual numbers of drug users are bound to be much higher. [View Article](#)

Coalition Needs to Do Better Job Protecting Women in Iraq, says Rights Group

06 August – VOA News reported a leading human rights group says many Iraqi women and girls have been abducted, assaulted and raped by Iraqi men since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime. The group, Human Rights Watch, has called on the coalition to do more to ensure their safety, and the coalition says it is beginning to address the issue. Iraq expert Hania Mufti of Human Rights Watch said her group has confirmed that 25 women and girls were raped in Baghdad in May and June, and there is medical evidence to prove the claims. She said there are many other cases that seem credible but cannot be proved. [View Article](#)

Diphtheria Outbreak, Southern Afghanistan

09 August – ProMED reported the residents of Zhare Dasht camp in Kandahar province, southern Afghanistan are facing an outbreak of [diphtheria](#). Information on the first cases in Zhare Dasht emerged on 14 July 2003, where one death had already occurred, with a further 2 in the days that immediately followed. Up until 02 Aug 2003, 40 cases of diphtheria have been clinically diagnosed. About half of the cases are laboratory-confirmed. 85 percent of the affected patients are between 5 and 18 years old, while 12.5 percent are over 18 years. All cases except one have a history of no vaccination. [View Article](#)

Health Ministry Working to Purify Thousands of Wells in Afghanistan

13 August – VOA News reported the Afghan Ministry of Health has begun chemically treating thousands of shallow wells in the capital Kabul. This campaign aims to reduce the incidence of [water-borne diseases](#), such as diarrhea, which are a major killer of children. The United Nations Children's Fund says an estimated 7,800 cases of diarrheal disease are reported in Kabul every week, caused mainly by drinking contaminated water. It says at least half of these cases affect children under five. UNICEF notes diarrheal disease accounts for more than 50 percent of all child deaths in Afghanistan. [View Article](#)

Iraqis Receive Training in Emergency Medical Techniques

18 August – VOA News reported up until now, Iraq has had few if any emergency medical personnel capable of dealing with traumas. That all changed, when 40 newly trained emergency medical technicians graduated from a program sponsored by the American military and the Coalition Provisional Authority, the U.S.-installed government running the country. Training medical staff to deal with traumas is new in Iraq, where hospitals, while clean and adequately staffed, have no emergency rooms. There are ambulances, but their drivers have no training in dealing with emergencies. [View Article](#)

Pakistan Tackles Huge Oil Spill

15 August – BBC News reported Pakistani authorities have begun a massive clean-up campaign to tackle the thousands of tons of crude oil that have spilled from a wrecked tanker off Karachi. Maritime experts say 12,000 metric tons of oil have spilled into the Arabian Sea while another 35,000 are still on board the Greek-registered Tasman Spirit. Dead fish and turtles littered two main beaches and a key mangrove forest had been badly hit, environmentalists said, while doctors reported dozens of people suffering from nausea. The authorities tried to play down fears of extensive environmental damage, saying the light quality of the crude meant it would evaporate quickly. However, environmentalists have expressed concern about the ability of the authorities to cope with the oil spill. [View Article](#)

UN Mounts System-wide Response to Devastating Floods in Pakistan

08 August – The UN Newswire reported with parts of Pakistan struggling to cope with the floods and mudslides caused by torrential monsoon rains, the United Nations has mounted a major response to help provide food, medical supplies and clean water to what they fear may be thousands of people left stranded throughout the region. According to an update from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), southern and southwestern parts of Pakistan have been devastated by floods following excessive monsoon rains during the last two weeks in July - especially the second round of storms that hit on 22 July. Sindh and Balochistan are the bearing the brunt of the damage, but the North Western Frontier Province has also been badly hit. According to the media more than 230 people have died since rains began. [View Article](#)

UN Says Ethiopia Malaria Epidemic Looms After Rain

09 August – Reuters reported the World Health Organization (WHO) says tens of thousands of Ethiopians may die in a [malaria](#) epidemic without urgent preventative steps in coming months after heavy rains enlarged mosquito breeding grounds. Risks appeared highest in previously drought-hit areas that had been drenched by rain. Since June, heavy downpours in southern, western and eastern areas have helped ease a three-year drought, causing serious flooding in some places. Kamla Siamevi, a WHO emergency and humanitarian coordinator, urged the authorities to pre-position adequate anti-malaria medicine in all areas with the potential for epidemics. [View Article](#)

Salmonella Cases on the Rise in UAE, Warns Expert

19 August – Gulf News reported [Salmonella](#) cases are rising in the UAE in places where food hygiene procedures are not up to standard. The last couple of years has seen an increase in cases of the disease, as well as the detection of amoebae, yersiniae and other food-borne contamination, according to Doctor Al El Sayed, a Consultant Hepatologist and Gastroenterology Consultant. And he points to poor hygiene conditions as the cause of the growing problem. He is now warning those who work in or manage establishments where food is produced, distributed and consumed, to be on their guard and employ the strictest possible procedures. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Beach Closings, Health Warnings Decline

18 August – CBS News reported beach closings and health warnings due to pollution declined last year even as local officials were more vigilant in monitoring shorelines for problems, an environmental group reported. The number of beach closures and advisories in 2002 declined by 9 percent from a year earlier, the Natural Resources Defense Council said in its 13th annual assessment of beach water quality. Using data from the Environmental Protection Agency and its own information-gathering, the group said there were at least 12,184 closings and swimming advisories at ocean, bay, Great Lakes and some freshwater beaches in 2002. That was down from a record 13,410 closings and advisories in 2001. [View Article](#)

Bubonic Plague Outbreak Hits Prairie Dog Colonies

09 August – ProMED reported residents in southern El Paso County are being warned to take immediate precautions as an outbreak of [bubonic plague](#) is spreading through prairie dog colonies. The plague has been detected in various parts of the county for years now, but this outbreak has the El Paso county

health department worried and they're warning people to protect their pets. Dr. Tom Wood of the El Paso county health department says, "The thing you worry about with dogs is [when the dog] brings in a sick or dying prairie dog, and then the fleas are on the owner, who is then exposed to the fleas. The thing we worry about with cats is they actually contract the infection and transmit it to people." [View Article](#)

California: Inyo County has First Hantavirus Case of the Year

09 August – ProMed reported health officials stated on Fri 8 Aug 2003 that they are investigating the state's first reported case in 2003 of [hantavirus](#) infection, a rare and sometimes fatal disease spread by rodents. An unidentified Inyo County man recovered from the disease, state Department of Health Services spokeswoman Lea Brooks said. It was not immediately clear how or where he had contracted the illness. [View Report](#)

Colorado: Ground Beef Recall Due to *E. coli* 0157

13 August – ProMed reported Colorado consumers should check their freezers for beef with the code "EST. 8934" on the label because the patties, steaks, and burgers may be contaminated and should not be eaten, health officials said. Two Colorado Springs teenage boys were admitted to hospital last week, and test results were positive for [Escherichia coli O157:H7](#) bacteria. The beef, traced to Howard Beef Processors in Pipestone, MN, and sold in Colorado through door-to-door vendors and supermarkets, was produced between 30 May and 11 Jun 2003. Howard Beef recalled 194,700 pounds of chopped-beef steaks, ground-beef patties, and gourmet beef-steak burgers. The supermarkets and sales companies that distributed the meat in Colorado have not been identified, but an investigation is under way. [View Report](#)

Detection of West Nile Virus in Blood Donations — United States, 2003

15 August – The CDC reported the blood supply in the US is being screened for [West Nile virus](#) (WNV) with new screening tests to help make the blood supply safer from transfusion-transmission of WNV. This year, every blood donation collected in the United States is being screened for WNV. Because most WNV infected people do not become ill, most donors with WNV in their blood will not be ill when they donate blood. Any donated blood that is positive on the screening test is removed from the blood supply and no longer available for transfusion. These new screening tests are still under development and currently have not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration. [View Article](#)

Diarrhea Cases Rise; Officials Fear Spoiled Food Is Cause

19 August – The New York Times reported the number of people seeking treatment for diarrhea and related illnesses at hospital emergency rooms across New York City has risen since the blackout, the city's Health Department reported, prompting concerns about whether New Yorkers are eating spoiled food. A health department spokeswoman, Sandra Mullin, said the increase was slight, though she said she did not know how many more cases had been seen, in which parts of the city, or their severity. She said the department was continuing to investigate the increase. [View Article](#)

Eastern Equine Encephalitis Update

August – ProMed reported on the following [Eastern Equine Encephalitis \(EEE\)](#) cases. [08 August](#) –An Alabama man and child died at the same hospital within 24 hours of each other from what officials said could be EEE. The man and child lived within 6 miles of a farm where a horse recently died of the disease. [13 August](#) - The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture is urging horse owners once again to vaccinate their animals for EEE after the disease was confirmed in an 8 year old Belgian mare that died last month in Turtle Lake. [15 August](#) - Another horse in Worcester County, Maryland has succumbed to EEE, raising the county's death count to 3 horses. Health officials also reported that EEE was detected in

mosquitoes collected from a swamp in the same town where the horse was infected. In response to the latest outbreak, the state Department of Agriculture conducted an aerial spraying mission last night over the Pocomoke River Swamp in Wicomico and Worcester counties. [15 August](#) - Health officials in North Carolina confirmed that a sick horse put to sleep in the north western edge of Union County last week had EEE. The state has reported at least 26 cases in horses so far this year, compared with only several at this time last year. [16 August](#) - EEE has struck 9 horses in Louisiana, 8 of them in the last 2 weeks. Tests are still out on several more horses. [19 August](#) - A state disease monitoring network in Delaware has detected EEE in sentinel chickens in the Delaware City area.

Illinois: Evansville Man Dies from Rocky Mountain Fever

12 August – ProMed reported a 27 year old man from Evansville, Illinois died on Tue 5 Aug 2003, days after contracting [Rocky Mountain spotted fever](#) from a tick bite near his home. He had been walking in the woods with his dogs near his Randolph County home about a week before, when a tick climbed into his beard and bit him, his sister said. [View Report](#)

New Jersey Issues Cautions Against Tick Paralysis

13 August – ProMed reported 2 cases of [tick paralysis](#) in South Jersey have prompted state health officials to warn residents to take precautions to avoid tick bites. A 5 year old girl in Burlington County suffered slurred speech and leg muscle weakness after a tick bite in May 2003. A 7 year old girl in Camden County had a hoarse voice and weak legs last week. Both children recovered 18 to 36 hours after ticks were removed, said state epidemiologist Eddy Bresnitz. [View Report](#)

Outbreak of Norovirus-associated Gastroenteritis on Alaskan Cruise Ship

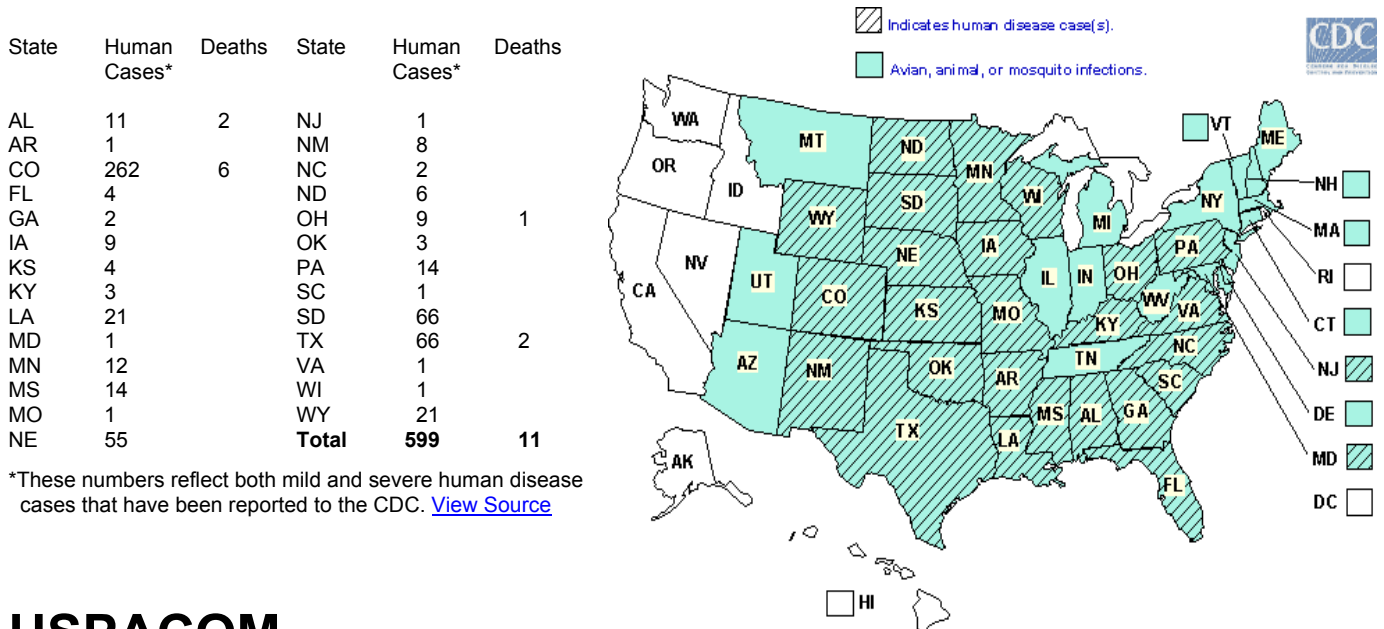
10 August – ProMed reported an outbreak of stomach illness has been reported among passengers and crew on the Star Princess cruise ship sailing between Seattle and Alaska. A total of 107 passengers and 14 crew members suffered vomiting and diarrhea from the common [Norovirus](#) during the current 7-day cruise, said Tom Dow, a spokesman for Princess Cruises in Seattle. No one was hospitalized. The outbreak was at its worst on Monday and Tuesday and then decreased, Dow said. 5 passengers and 2 crew members were sick yesterday out of a total of 2800 passengers and 1100 crew, he said. The illness is usually brought on board by a passenger and spreads easily in close quarters. Precautions were taken, including serving passengers rather than using buffet lines, placing hand-sanitizing dispensers in food areas, and notifying passengers to wash their hands frequently. [View Report](#)

Sanitary Alert for Rickettsia Cases in Durango, Mexico

07 August – ProMED reported health authorities in the state of Durango have declared a "sanitary alert" in the municipality of Rodeo, community of Linares del Rio, after the detection of an outbreak of [rickettsiosis](#), a disease relatively common in California. A 14-year-old girl died and 2 other victims remain hospitalized. Gerardo Perez Ibarra, president of Rodeo, informed that the minor was taken to the general hospital of the municipality, where she died. Another patient, also a minor, was taken to the emergency department of a hospital in California, where he has been reported to be out of danger. 2 other children contracted the disease and were referred to the general hospital of the city of Durango. [View Article](#)

West Nile Fever Update

West Nile virus 2003 Human Cases Reported to the CDC as of August 19, 2003



USPACOM

Agent Orange Lingers in Vietnam Food

11 August – Reuters reported a study shows Vietnam War-era defoliant Agent Orange continues to contaminate livestock and fish eaten by Vietnamese decades after it was used. A 2002 study in Bien Hoa city, about 20 miles north of Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, showed residents and food had high levels of [dioxin](#), the August issue of The Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine said. The report said about 95 percent of blood samples taken from 43 people in Bien Hoa "were found to have elevated TCDD levels," referring to the most toxic of the dioxins. "Although the spraying ended over three decades ago, in certain areas of Vietnam food is clearly a present-day route of intake of dioxin from Agent Orange," the study said. Tests on 16 food samples from the city's markets, a lake and a nearby air base where Agent Orange had been stored found "markedly elevated" dioxin levels in six samples. [View Article](#)

Animal Farms Focus of SARS Search

19 August – The Taipei Times reported tracking [SARS](#) toward its source, scientists are inspecting exotic animal farms in southern China's Guangdong region as part of a project "mapping the province's biological environment," the government said. The 14-member team of foreign and Chinese experts is particularly interested in learning more about the animals and their contacts with humans, the official Xinhua News Agency reported, quoting team member Guan Yi, a microbiologist from the University of Hong Kong. The World Health Organization (WHO) declined comment until the trip was complete, said Zhang Pingping of WHO's Beijing office. [View Article](#)

China 'WWII Gas' Spill

11 August – BBC News reported an accident in China involving chemical weapons allegedly left behind by Japanese troops in World War II has left at least 36 people ill. Metal drums containing what is thought to be [mustard gas](#) were found on a construction site in the city of Qiqihar in Heilongjiang province. Most of the injured are construction workers and people who came into contact with the drums after they had

been unwittingly opened. China's official media said 34 of the injured were in the hospital, with two "close to death". The accident occurred last week when construction workers found five metal barrels. One was opened, causing an oil-like substance to spill into the soil, according to the official China Daily. Workers later cut the barrels into pieces and sold them to a recycling facility. Polluted soil from the building site was then moved to other locations as part of the construction work, the paper said. [View Article](#)

CJD Alarm in New Zealand

08 August – BBC News reported a New Zealand man is suspected of having the human form of [mad cow disease](#), sparking concern in the country's extensive farming community. The 26-year-old farm worker is now in the hospital, but it will take several weeks to establish whether he is definitely suffering from variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD), public health director Colin Tukuitonga said. Agriculture officials have been quick to stress that New Zealand's large cattle stock is still free of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). Even if the man in question is found to have the disease, "that would not reflect on the BSE-free status of New Zealand's livestock," said Derek Belton, director of animal biosecurity. He said "the logical conclusion" would be that the patient contracted the disease from contaminated food that was imported from Britain before at-risk products were banned in 1996. [View Article](#)

Dangerous Amoeba Found in Hot Springs, Public Baths

19 August – Japan Today reported a pathogenic amoeba, which was confirmed to cause fatal brain inflammation in animal tests conducted in Europe, was found in hot-spring and public bath facilities across Japan, although no infection has yet been reported, a health ministry research team said. The amoeba — [Naegleria australiensis](#) — was among various kinds of amoebas found in bath water and drained warm water at 60% of the 248 facilities, which recycle hot bath water using filters, in 12 of the 14 regions tested nationwide with the cooperation of local hygiene research institutes. [View Article](#)

Diarrhea Kills 67 People in Northern India

13 August – Yahoo News reported an outbreak of [diarrhea](#) in India's most populous state has killed at least 67 people, mostly children, in the past 10 days, a government health official said. Deaths from waterborne diseases during the rainy season are common in Uttar Pradesh, an impoverished state with poor water, power and health facilities. An outbreak of diarrhea has been reported in 11 districts and more than 250 people have been admitted to hospitals statewide. At least 67 people have died since Aug. 4, most of them children. Local news reports say the death toll is much higher than the official figure. [View Article](#)

Half of Tuberculosis Deaths in India Caused by Smoking

16 August – VOA News reported there is more news about the deadly effects of smoking. An article in the current issue of The Lancet reports that smoking increases the risk of dying of [tuberculosis](#). After studying 45,000 male smokers in India, in the late 1990's, researchers found that 4,000 died of tuberculosis, or other related lung diseases. That's double the number of non-smokers in a similar-sized group who died of TB during the same period. Those who smoked "bidi," a small cigarette popular throughout Asia, were also found to have double the risk of fatal TB compared with non-smokers. Study co-author Prabhat Jha, of the University of Toronto's Center for Global Health Research in Canada, says cigarettes appear to undermine the ability of smokers' immune systems to keep early stages of tuberculosis under control. [View Article](#)

India: Worst Cholera Outbreak in Five Years

12 August – ProMED reported as many as 715 [cholera](#) cases have been reported from various parts of the capital, the MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) said. MCD's health officials said unsanitary

conditions had led to the cholera outbreak in the city. "One of the main reasons for the outbreak has been the supply of contaminated water by the Delhi Jal Board," alleged MCD officials. The last such serious outbreak was in 1998; 567 cases up to June of that year. In 2002 the MCD recorded 837 cases of cholera. Officials admitted that this will be the largest outbreak in the past 5 years. [View Article](#)

Indian States Test Coke, Pepsi for Pesticides

07 August – Reuters reported several Indian state governments said they will conduct random tests on soft drinks sold by Coca-Cola and PepsiCo in the country after an environment group said the beverages contained [pesticides](#). The two firms have strongly rejected the findings that the soft drinks sold in India did not meet international standards and released advertisements in newspapers saying the beverages were safe. The Center for Science and Environment (CSE), a private green lobbying group, said its tests showed drinks sold by the Indian units of the U.S. soft drink giants contained four toxic chemicals: lindane, DDT, malathion and chlorpyrifos. [View Article](#)

Marshall Islands: Measles Outbreak Alert for Majuro Island

09 August – ProMed reported the Department of Public Health has issued an alert for those who plan on traveling to the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The Secretary of Health and Environment in the Marshall Islands has reported that there is a [measles](#) outbreak on the island of Majuro. According to a media release suspect cases were first noted about 10 days ago. To date, more than 40 suspect cases have been identified, all of which are in Majuro. The illness is affecting most age groups up to age 40. 6 of 10 patient specimens sent to the Hawaii Department of Health Laboratory were positive for measles virus. [View Report](#)

USPACOM Dengue Fever Update

12 August – ProMed reported during 2003 up to the middle of July there have been 18,797 [dengue fever/dengue hemorrhagic fever](#) cases reported from 30 provinces and 188 districts in Indonesia, with 256 fatal cases (case fatality rate (CFR) = 1.4 per cent). With a total population of 210 million the incidence is 8.80 [per 10 000] DHF cases reported from hospitals. In San Fernando City, Philippines, health authorities have raised the alarm about the rapid increase in the number of dengue cases in the province, where 5 people have already died. The office of the Department of Health in the Cordillera Administrative Region (DOH-CAR) also reported an alarming increase in the CAR, from 62 dengue cases in 2002 to 353 this year with one death. This is a fivefold increase in dengue cases. In Karnataka India, 79 dengue cases found in Dakshina Kannada. Officials reported that the fever had spread from neighboring Kerala, bordering Sullia taluk, where over 100 deaths had been reported due to dengue. [View Report](#) 18 August – ProMed reported Regional health officials of Cordillera Administrative Region (DOH-CAR), Philippines, raised a dengue alert region-wide following over 360 admissions with one death reported since January [2003]. Also in the Philippines, in Mindanao, dengue cases have increased by 300 percent from the same period of 2002 and half of the 32 towns and 2 cities in the province of Northern Luzon have been afflicted by the disease since February this year. In China, Guangzhou Ai Wei Ban notes that up to 10 Aug 2003 Guangzhou reported a total of 44 dengue fever cases. [View Report](#)

WHO Warns Betel and Areca-nut Chewing Causes Cancer

07 August – Betel-quid and areca nut chewing, a traditional habit widely practiced in many parts of Asia, causes [oral cancer](#) even when not chewed in combination with tobacco, according to new findings released by the World Health Organization. A new cause for concern is aggressive advertising, targeted at the middle class and at children, that has enhanced sales and use of mass-produced, pre-packaged areca-nut products now available in many countries around the world, WHO said in a news release in Geneva. In some parts of India, almost one out of three children and teenagers regularly or occasionally chew these products. A previous evaluation in 1985 had found only that chewing betel quid with tobacco

was carcinogenic to humans. The habit is popular not only in Asia but among immigrants in the United Kingdom, other parts of Europe, North America and Australia. [View Article](#)

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Brazil: Dengue Fever

18 August – ProMed reported up to Mon 11 Aug 2003, the state of Ceara (northeast Brazil) has recorded 19,695 cases of dengue, including 264 of [Dengue hemorrhagic fever](#) (DHF) with 16 deaths, in 32 municipalities. A further 15 cases of suspected DHF, including 7 deaths, await confirmation. In the state capital, Fortaleza, there have been 6,243 cases of dengue with 9 deaths. A survey for *Aedes aegypti* from March-May 2003 showed that the house index in 57 cities was greater than 3 percent, whereas WHO recommends it should be kept below one percent. The figures for 2003 show that so far this is the 4th biggest dengue epidemic in the history of the state. Up to the first week of July 2003, Manaus registered 2,748 cases of dengue, of which 476 were in the Zona Sul, a middle-class area but where there is an accumulation of rubbish and industrial waste, retaining water in which the vector mosquito is breeding. [View Report](#)

Caribbean Region: Decrease in Prevalence of Dengue/DHF

12 August – ProMed reported during epidemiological weeks 14 to 26, 2003, 391 cases of dengue fever and 10 cases of [Dengue hemorrhagic fever](#) (DHF) were reported to CAREC, compared to 1,498 cases of dengue fever and 34 cases of DHF in the corresponding period last year. This fourfold decrease is likely to be due to the delayed onset of the rainy season in 2003. During the period under review 97 per cent of the dengue fever cases were reported from 4 countries, Barbados, Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. During the period under review dengue virus type 2 was reported from Suriname. During the first 13 weeks of 2003, dengue virus type 3 was also reported from 3 countries, Anguilla, Barbados, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. [View Report](#)

Yellow Fever in Peru

17 August – ProMed reported in Epidemiological Week 30 [20-26 July 2003], a death was reported from a probable case of [yellow fever](#), in a 22-year-old man from the town of Pavo, Province of Bella Vista, Department of San Martin. Epidemiological investigation conducted by the General Office of Epidemiology identified 13 other probable cases, 3 of them resulting in death. 7 cases were laboratory confirmed; the others are waiting on the second sample. All cases come from the town of Pavo, Province of Bella Vista, and from the towns of Aucarca & El Zancudo, both located in the Province of Mariscal Caceres. 12 of the 14 cases are in males, 9 of whom fall into the age group 15-44 years old, who have been in the area of the outbreak from 13 days to 8 months. 3 of the cases reported a history of vaccination for yellow fever. Those affected were from the departments of Cajamarca, Piura, and Amazonas in the waves of migrant workers who arrive at harvest time, between June and August, and road workers. [View Report](#)

Please contact the below-listed POC for suggested improvements and/or comments regarding this report. This report is also available on the USACHPPM website at <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/Hiouupdate/>.

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