

5 BEYOND OUR BORDERS

The 'Beyond our Borders' column focuses on selected and current international diseases that may affect South Africans travelling abroad.

Colombia: Zika virus

Colombia's Ministry of Health confirmed that from 16 October 2015, nine locally-acquired cases of Zika virus infection have been reported in the metropolitan area of Cartagena, Bolívar Department. Zika virus had not previously been reported in this country. Zika virus is a flavivirus from the same family as dengue and West Nile viruses. It is transmitted by mosquitoes. Travellers are advised to practice daytime insect precautions.

Pakistan: Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever

Twenty-five Congo virus-positive cases were confirmed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, with 11 deaths, Samaa reported Thursday 15 Oct 2015. CCHF virus is endemic in Pakistan. The virus is transmitted by *Hyalomma* spp. ticks or through contact with infected human blood or animal blood and tissues and can cause severe viral haemorrhagic fever outbreaks, with a case fatality rate of 10-40 percent.

USA: Salmonellosis, serotype Poona

An outbreak of diarrhoea due to *Salmonella* Poona is ongoing in the USA. As of 13 Oct 2015, 767 people infected with the outbreak strains of have been reported from 36 states. Among 561 people with available information, 157 (28 percent) report being hospitalized and 4 deaths have been reported. The source of the infection was identified as being cucumbers, originating from Mexico. Cucumbers were recalled on 11th September 2015, but cases continue to be reported.

Philippines: Typhoon Koppu

On 18 October 2015, Typhoon Koppu struck the northern Philippines, causing fatalities and widespread infrastructure damage. Travellers should expect disruption of transportation and basic services, avoid affected areas, and monitor local media.

China: Avian influenza H7N9, human

Raising the alarm for poultry-related livelihoods and public health, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO) warned that a 4th wave of avian influenza H7N9 has commenced on 2 Oct 2015 after Chinese authorities in Zhejiang Province reported the first two human cases since July 2015. On 14 Oct 2015, the WHO was notified of two additional laboratory-confirmed cases. WHO advises that travellers to countries with known outbreaks of avian influenza should avoid poultry farms, or contact with animals in live bird markets, or entering areas where poultry may be slaughtered, or contact with any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with faeces from poultry or other animals.

Source: Division of Public Health Surveillance and Response

References and additional reading:

ProMED-Mail (www.promedmail.org)

World Health Organization (www.who.int)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)