

7 BEYOND OUR BORDERS

The 'Beyond our Borders' column focuses on selected and current international diseases that may affect South Africans travelling abroad. Numbers correspond to Figure 9 on page 16.

1. Saudi Arabia and the Middle East: MERS-CoV and cholera

MERS-CoV: There have been 2 reported deaths of non-healthcare workers in Riyadh province. Since 2012 to 04/11/2015 there has been a total of 1 275 lab-confirmed cases of MERS-CoV. This includes 546 deaths, 722 recoveries, 1 asymptomatic and 8 current cases. Presently, the vast majority of cases are likely to have contracted infection in health care facilities. A small minority have exposure to camels.

Cholera: Approximately 2 500 cases of cholera have been reported from Iraq. Cases have also been reported from Bahrain and Kuwait. It is unclear if cases have been reported from war-torn Syria. Travellers are advised to follow rigorous hygienic measures.

2. USA: Plague

Oregon Health officials have confirmed bubonic plague in a girl who fell ill 3 days after a hunting trip in Heppner, in Morrow County. She probably contracted the disease from a flea bite. No other human cases have been reported. Plague is unlikely in travellers to USA, but avoidance of contact with wild animals especially rodents by humans and pets is advocated.

3. Colombia, Brazil: Zika virus

Zika virus has been reported in high numbers from Colombia and Brazil. Other central and southern American countries fear the emergence of Zika, which is an emerging arbovirus spread through *Aedes* mosquitoes. Disease presents as fever, rash, joint pain and non-purulent conjunctivitis, similarly to chikungunya and dengue, though it is usually less severe. Travellers are advised to avoid mosquito bites.

4. South Sudan: Yellow fever

It emerged that fake yellow fever cards were being sold at Juba International Airport to unvaccinated individuals. The State Ministry of health has subsequently banned the sale. There are reports that some of their own employees are implicated. A yellow fever outbreak occurred in West and South Kordofan in 2013 and Darfur between 2012 and 2013. The importation and exporting of the disease poses a serious public health concern when proper

vaccination is not taking place.

5. China: Avian influenza

According to Zhejiang Centre for Disease Control since autumn 2015 there have been 4 cases of human H7N9 avian influenza infections. The WHO had a total of 679 lab confirmed cases reported with 275 fatalities from 2013 - 2015. The Ministry of Agriculture has a number of prevention strategies: improvement of early warning and monitoring programs; strengthening of live bird market regulation and epidemic prevention strategies; improved health and veterinary sector collaboration and emergency preparedness.

6. Mozambique: Contaminated beer

In January 2015 75 persons died and over 150 were hospitalised after drinking contaminated beer at a funeral. This November it was reported that a bacterium, *Burkholderia gladioli* has been found in flour used to make the beer after it was sent for testing in the USA. The organism produces a toxin that has a high case-fatality rate in food poisoning cases. Similar cases have been reported in China (fermented corn flour snacks) and Indonesia (fermented soybean cake). This outbreak has been the largest such occurrence to date.

7. Australia: Pertussis

The Australian Department of Health reports that there have been 8 200 cases since January 2015, centered mainly on the Australian East Coast, and New South Wales. This is the highest number of cases reported in the last four years. Most cases have been in persons under the age of 14 years.

8. Mozambique and Tanzania: Cholera

A cholera outbreak was reported on 5 November 2015 in three districts of Zambezia Province, Mozambique, namely Namula, Malema and Mocuba. There have been 1 237 suspected cases, 49 hospitalizations, 10 lab confirmed cases and 5 deaths. Health authorities are stockpiling medication and conducting social mobilisation campaigns to halt the spread of the disease.

An outbreak of cholera in Tanzania has been reported to WHO this month. A number of districts are affected and over 8 000 cases have been

5 BEYOND OUR BORDERS

reported. Further details are awaited.

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

10. Zambia: Measles

Following a protracted outbreak of measles in DR Congo, measles has now been reported in Zambia. So far 30 cases are suspected with 1 confirmed. WHO is awaiting further information.

References and additional reading:
ProMED-Mail (www.promedmail.org)
World Health Organization (www.who.int)

Source: Division of Public Health Surveillance and Response

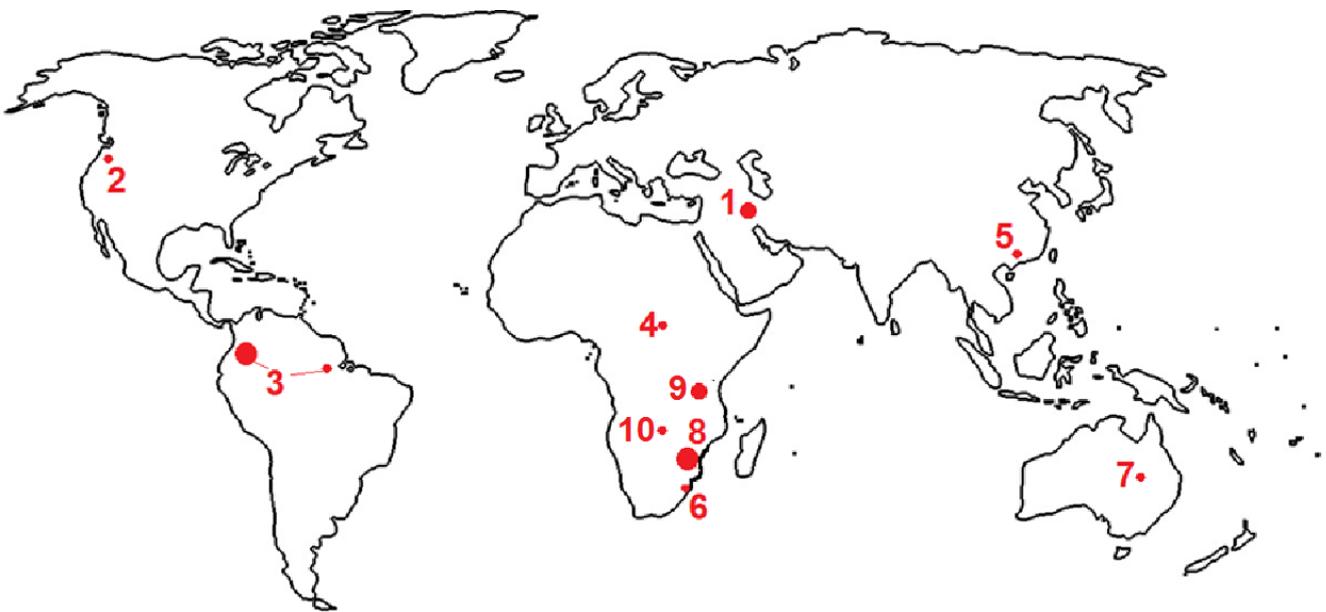


Figure 9. Current outbreaks (as of 18 November 2015) that may have implications for travellers. Numbers correspond to text above. The red dot is the approximate location of the outbreak or event.