

Yellow fever outbreak reported in Paraguay

February 25 2008

Health officials reported an outbreak of yellow fever in Paraguay, with seven confirmed cases in San Pedro and four as yet unconfirmed cases in San Lorenzo.

In addition, Africa Fighting Malaria -- a non-profit health advocacy group based in South Africa and in Washington -- said the number of cases reported by neighboring Brazilian health authorities has more than quadrupled during the past two months, with 13 deaths reported.

Yellow fever is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes. Although a vaccine exists, there is no cure for the disease that infects about 200,000 people annually.

"As with malaria, the yellow fever outbreaks highlight the urgent need for carefully controlled insecticide spraying programs," said Richard Tren, director of Africa Fighting Malaria. "These programs should have been strengthened to sustain progress.

"Decades of anti-insecticides pressure culminated in 1997 when the World Health Assembly passed a resolution to reduce the use of insecticides in disease control," added Tren. "The resurgence of yellow fever is an unfortunate consequence of that resolution."

The World Health Organization said it has sent 4 million doses of vaccine to Paraguay, along with an epidemiologist, virologist and other emergency management experts.

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