

Climate change amplifying animal disease

May 25 2009



The world's top agency for animal health said that climate change is widening viral disease among farm animals, expanding the spread of some microbes that are also a known risk to humans.

Climate change is widening viral disease among farm animals, expanding the spread of some microbes that are also a known risk to humans, the world's top agency for animal health said on Monday.

The World Animal Health Organisation -- known as OIE, an acronym of its name in French -- said a survey of 126 of its member-states found 71 percent were "extremely concerned" about the expected impact of [climate change](#) on animal disease.

Fifty-eight percent said they had already identified at least one disease that was new to their territory or had returned to their territory, and that they associated with climate change.

The three most mentioned diseases were bluetongue, spread among sheep by biting midges; [Rift Valley fever](#), a livestock disease that can also be picked up by people handling infected meat; and [West Nile virus](#), which is transmitted by mosquito from infected birds to both animals and humans.

"More and more countries are indicating that climate change has been responsible for at least one emerging or re-emerging [disease](#) occurring on their territory," OIE Director General Bernard Vallat said in a statement.

"This is a reality we cannot ignore and we must help veterinary services throughout the world to equip themselves with systems that comply with international standards of good governance so as to deal with this problem."

In 2007, the UN's Nobel-winning experts, the Intergovernment Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a landmark report that warned changing weather patterns could widen the habitat of disease-bearing insects.

This would have repercussions for human health, in such areas as malaria and dengue fever, the IPCC said.

The study was issued on Monday on the second day of a six-day general assembly of the OIE.

The Paris-based agency, with 174 member countries and territories, is a clearing house of scientific information on livestock and sets down guidelines for sanitary safety and welfare in farm animals.

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Citation: Climate change amplifying animal disease (2009, May 25) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-05-climate-amplifying-animal-disease.html>

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