

Newly arrived virus spreads in Dominican Republic

April 29 2014



In this undated file photo provided by the USDA, an *Aedes aegypti* mosquito is shown on human skin. Health officials in the Dominican Republic said this Tuesday April 29, 2014, that the mosquito-borne chikungunya virus has spread widely since making its first appearance in the country. According to the Centers for Disease Control the chikungunya virus is most often spread to people by *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. These are the same mosquitoes that transmit dengue virus. They bite mostly during the daytime. (AP Photo/USDA, File)

Health officials in the Dominican Republic say a mosquito-borne virus has spread widely since making its first appearance in the country.

The Health Ministry says it has documented about 3,500 suspected cases of chikungunya virus since it was first detected in March. Most cases have been near the capital, but Health Minister Freddy Hidalgo said Tuesday there have been some isolated cases in northern provinces.

Hidalgo spoke at the start of a two-day conference attended by representatives from Central American countries.

The virus is most commonly found in Asia and Africa. It was first detected in the Caribbean in December in French St. Martin and has spread to nearby islands.

Chikungunya is rarely fatal but it can cause high fever and intense joint and muscle pain. There is no vaccine.

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