

First domestic case of chikungunya in Brazil

September 17 2014

Brazil's authorities on Tuesday reported the first domestically contracted cases of the mosquito-borne chikungunya virus, prompting the government to announce it was stepping up attempts to control the disease.

The joint disease, which causes [high fever](#) and painful arthritis, is endemic to Africa and south Asia but has been moving north as well as west.

Brazil's cases emerged in Oiapoque municipality in the northern region of Amapa, bordering French Guiana, where cases have also been reported.

The Brazilian health ministry said the two sufferers appeared not to have traveled abroad recently, suggesting they must have contracted chikungunya in Brazil.

The country reported 37 cases between January and this month, although on each occasion the patient had contracted the disease abroad.

A health ministry spokesman said the government would "step up control measures" to combat an illness which bears some resemblance to dengue fever and for which there is no vaccine.

Europe reported its first locally transmitted case of the mosquito-borne illness in 2007, in Italy and the first home-grown case reported in the United States emerged in July.

The ministry revealed it has alerted health authorities and communities to the possibility of further cases and planned to have sprayed with pesticide hatcheries of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which transmits dengue, to limit its spread.

According to the Pan American Health Organization, the Southern Cone states saw the majority of dengue cases detected globally this year.

Of a total 670,139 cases in the region, 659,051 were in Brazil, 249 of them fatal.

Earlier this year, British bio-tech firm Oxitec revealed it was using [genetically modified mosquitoes](#) to fight dengue after altering the DNA of the *Aedes aegypti*.

When the mosquitoes pass on the genetic modification to their offspring, the latter die ahead of adulthood and before they can either bite or transmit the [dengue virus](#).

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