

Brazil-Argentina-Paraguay Triple Border Fears Yellow Fever Epidemics

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Since the confirmed yellow fever deaths of two jungle workers in the neighboring province of Misiones in the triple border between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, more dead monkeys have been found in the jungle of northeast Argentina, next to Brazil and Paraguay, probably caused by yellow fever, according to local sanitary authorities.

Corrientes province sanitary officials, however, were quick to point out that "there's no risk of another yellow fever epidemic," since 95% of the exposed population and at risk have been immunized" against yellow fever.

The sixth dead monkey was found this weekend in the Garruchos jungle area neighboring to the north with Misiones, where other infected monkeys had been detected as well as the two human deaths.

"The animal was too highly decomposed so we were not able to take samples for testing," said Marcelo Jiménez, head of the Sanitary Zone, who together with special teams are visiting the different jungle areas and villages to check health conditions and vaccinate the local population.

"We're visiting home by home in Garruchos, San Carlos and Colonia Liebig areas, where last week five dead monkeys were found, but they were also too decomposed for samples," said Jimenez.

Anyhow Argentine sanitary authorities are considering the monkeys as "positive" given their high vulnerability to yellow fever.

Adolfo Schneider, head of the Public Health Department of Corrientes said that last December "200.000 people had been inoculated against yellow fever in Corrientes, and the percentage of population not vaccinated so far in the border areas is minimum."

According to Argentine federal authorities, 90% of the Corrientes province population has been vaccinated, "but our goal is 100% inoculation."

Hugo Fernandez head of the Epidemics Prevention and Risks department said that the outbreak could potentially expand to other north-eastern Argentine provinces "or even further," but "we are working on dead and live monkeys in the border area with Paraguay and Brazil."

Fernandez revealed that 90% of the population of the provinces of Misiones, Corrientes and Formosa, neighboring with Paraguay and Brazil, have been inoculated, "but we need to add other provinces for risk prevention."

Yellow fever is caused by a small virus that is spread by the bite of mosquitoes and is common in South America. Anyone can get yellow fever, but the elderly have a higher risk of severe infection. If a person is bitten by an infected mosquito, symptoms usually develop 3 to 6 days later.

First symptoms are headache, muscle aches, fever, loss of appetite, vomiting, and jaundice. After approximately 3 to 4 days, victims often experience brief remission.

After a few days (3 to 4) fever and other symptoms go away. Most individuals will recover at this stage, but others may move onto the third, most dangerous stage (intoxication stage) within 24 hours. This includes multi-organ dysfunction, liver and kidney failure, bleeding disorders/hemorrhage, brain dysfunction including delirium, seizures, coma, shock and death.

In Argentina last year ten people contracted the disease and two official deaths were reported. Between the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008, eight people died of the disease in Paraguay and in Brazil, 19.

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