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The British Global and Travel Health Association

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Aggressive fox raises Rabies alert in Connecticut

https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/aggressive-fox-in-putnam-euthanized-tests-positive-for-rabies/ar-BB1kADwN

It is a worry just how often we consider dogs as the only real concern with regard to the risk of rabies while travelling. Unfortunately that is far from the truth as any warm-blooded animal can become infected and thus pass on the disease to another animal or to an unsuspecting human. This report from the USA, and others from Europe in particular, should emphasise the constant need to avoid any and all animal contact while travelling outside of the (currently) rabies-free regions of Western Europe. Any salivary contact (not just a bite) needs to be treated with the respect needed to avoid the risk of contracting this horrific disease.

Dogs and cats in Marinduque (Philippines) to be vaccinated against Rabies as cases rise

https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/regions/902270/da-to-vaccinate-dogs-cats-to-curb-rabies-cases-in-marinduque-livestock/story/

Yes, don't forget the cats as another potential serious rabies risk!

So far in 2024 in Vietnam 143,000 people have required Rabies post exposure vaccination

https://tuoitrenews.vn/news/society/20240328/rabies-immunization-costs-vietnamese-8mn-in-janmar/79036.html

One of the most common phone calls which come through to the emergency lines from travellers overseas relates to some level of animal exposure and the panic (quite correctly) that this may have placed them at risk of rabies. Certainly SE Asia and India would be among the most common regions where this occurs and frequently when asked what they were doing when bitten (or licked, scratched etc) the individual frequently replies *"I was so unfortunate, I just picked up the monkey for a photograph and he bit me".* Yes, that certainty does tend to provoke even the gentlest of animals!

Tick alert issued in Poland as cases of Tick Borne Encephalitis increase

https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/wzrasta-liczba-przypadkow-groznej-choroby-winna-zwiekszona-aktywnosc-kleszczy/6868rkn

Below are some further examples of where ticks and their diseases are becoming a significant worry for public health. With over 659 cases of Tick-Borne Encephalitis (TBE) identified during 2023 the Polish authorities have issued alerts to advise the local populations and their visitors of this risk and the ways to avoid exposure. Certainly the vaccines we have available provide excellent cover (which is why they are part of the childhood programme in Austria and other affected countries) but awareness and avoiding potential risk areas (long grass, forested regions, wandering off the main paths etc) is advice we should be constantly sharing with our patients.

Concern over reports of Tick Borne Encephalitis in UK

https://www.thecooldown.com/green-tech/tick-borne-encephalitis-uk-man-bitten/

Case of Tick Borne Encephalitis reported in Pskov region of Russia

https://informpskov.ru/news/449130.html

Reports of 30 with Tick Borne Encephalitis in Leningrad and St Petersburg (Russia)

https://www.fontanka.ru/2024/04/03/73417145/

Significant increase in Tick Borne Encephalitis cases reported in Switzerland

https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/life-aging/tick-borne-encephalitis-cases-double-in-switzerland-compared-to-previous-year/75914717

Concern as dog with tick-borne Babesiosis identified in New Zealand

https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/513594/rare-dog-parasite-discovered-for-first-time-in-new-zealand

But just in case you thought that TBE was the only cause for concern with regard to ticks . . . . . (sincerely hoping you also haven't forgotten about Lyme Disease!)

Update on Meningitis situation in West Africa with 2792 cases so far in 2024

https://www.wahooas.org/web-ooas/en

Outbreaks of Meningococcal meningitis sweep across Central Africa (and elsewhere) on a regular basis and frequently due to the lack of a systematic vaccination programme against this awful disease.

13yo with Japanese Encephalitis identified in Kerala

https://keralakaumudi.com/en/news/news.php?id=1278156&u=

Japanese Encephalitis is another good reason to avoid the attention of the mosquito. This is a really serious disease with a high mortality and even for those who do not succumb to the disease the prolonged neurological symptoms can be devastating. In India most cases are reported in the north-eastern regions of the country (Assam province and West Bengal) but this case from Kerala (south west of the country) shows how it can appear in unusual regions.

Warning against mosquito-borne Ross River infection if visiting Queensland
https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/cases-of-this-mosquito-borne-virus-are-on-the-rise-heres-how-to-protect-yourself/7gtuud09n
And yet again another splendid reason to avoid the attention of mosquitoes even within Australia or other areas of the world where they can be a total nuisance. Ross River may present with signs and symptoms of what appears to be arthritis and lead to an incorrect diagnosis of 'seronegative rheumatoid arthritis' in those unaware of this potential mosquito-borne risk. Avoiding aspirin-based medications is important as they may aggravate capillary permeability and lead to other significant consequences!

Reports of Lassa Fever from Guinea, Liberia and Nigeria
https://www.wahooas.org/web-ooas/en
Lassa Fever broke into the world of tropical medicine well before the HIV virus took over our focus in the early 1980's. It was initially identified in Lassa (a small town close to Jos) in 1969. It is one of the many haemorrhagic diseases which are present in Africa but the initial history suggested that it would turn into a global pandaemic. However since that time more information has become available and anti-viral treatment has helped contain the disease outbreaks. Nevertheless, as this report shows, the disease has not gone away and still is a major health concern for the countries battling to control its spread – primarily through public health awareness and the part that rats play in its transmission.

37yo in Hong Kong develops Herpes B infection from monkey contact
https://www.news.gov.hk/eng/2024/04/20240403/20240403_222910_316.html
Yes of course monkeys are involved in a number of diseases which are important to humans (eg Yellow Fever, Rabies etc) but perhaps Herpes B is not high on our list of concerns – although it should be! For our travellers who are bitten, licked or scratched by monkeys (frequently from Bali but from other regions too) the thought of anti-rabies protocols tends to overwhelm our advice but nevertheless forgetting the potential risk of Herpes B could be quite disastrous for the individual.

Tourists from UK warned about risks of Yellow Fever in many popular destinations
https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/serious-illness-warning-holiday-hotspots-9214850
The '*it will never happen to me*' approach leads to many serious road traffic accidents and in the same way many of our patients only want to know what vaccines they may be stopped for along their travels rather than cover against the relatively rare but nevertheless serious diseases! Kenya is a good example where the authorities will not look for cover against Yellow Fever unless the traveller is specifically coming from an endemic region of the world. Thus travellers from Western Europe will not be required to show evidence of cover against this disease even if travelling to regions within the country where potential risk may occur.

Fake Botox alert issued by CDC as cases of Botulism identified
https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/apr/11/fake-botox-illness-botulism
So, the desire to achieve 'beauty' has its drawbacks and certainly fake botox and the problems it causes may leads to a very different future than what was anticipated!

Mycobacterium infection in Belo Horizonte associated with cosmetic surgery
https://g1.globo.com/mg/minas-gerais/noticia/2024/03/28/governo-de-mg-confirma-surto-da-micobacteria-pos-procedimentos-esteticos-em-clinica-de-bh.ghtml
If fake botox and botulism is not enough to dissuade those heading to their hope of nirvana then perhaps knowing about the mycobacterium infections in Mexico may help concentrate their mind!

Warning against Dengue issued in Bali as cases increase
https://www.pravda.ru/news/travel/1995149-na-bali-bystro-rasprostranjaetsja-likhoradka-denge/
We have known about the risks of many of the mosquito borne diseases which occur across Indonesia for many years. These include Dengue, Chikungunya, Japanese Encephalitis, Zika and others. However with the number of Dengue reports increasing significantly the question arises should we be 'encouraging' our patients to have the new dengue vaccine and now with the recent release and licensing of Qdenga in UK and other European countries that has become a distinct possibility. However . . . . . there are a few issues which perhaps are causing confusion and an unhealthy degree of uncertainty! The recent release from UK Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has very clearly laid out their opinions on the indications and restrictions with regard to the use of Qdenga. [link below]

They clearly state that Qdenga vaccine should be given to children 4 years of age and older **but only in those with a confirmed diagnosis of prior dengue infection.** This would exclude the vast majority of our Western European travellers. The rational is that in these individuals there is a theoretical risk of an even more severe attack of dengue following a subsequent infection due to prior 'sensitisation' of their immune system by the administration of the vaccine.

Another question relates to the age where this vaccine can be administered. Some Takeda data sheets say 6 to 45 years and other say 4 years and older. Having to strictly use the subcutaneous route is another hurdle to be overcome. Clearly there are some questions relating to this vaccine which need to be addressed before widespread usage can be considered for many of our travellers.

JRNI Link: *https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/news/763/qdenga-dengue-vaccine-guidance*