

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

31 January 2003

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information regarding potential strategic or tactical impact to the US Army and as such, should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available at <http://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil/>. The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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HOT ISSUES

Blood Test for Lung Cancer May be Possible

28 January - Science Health News reported a blood test that can detect one of the forms of lung cancer before it takes hold may become possible following new Russian research. Alexandr Bazhin of the Belozersky Institute of Physico-Chemical Biology at Moscow State University and colleagues say they have discovered a series of antibody markers that could form the basis of a new screening tool for 'small cell' lung cancer. Cancerous cells are known to express protein 'antigens' that are alien to the body, leading it to produce antibodies that attack them in response. Several studies have shown it is possible to identify the antibodies in the serum of cancer sufferers. In theory, such antibodies could be used as 'markers' for tumors; but in practice, attempts to use individual antibodies as markers have failed. Bazhin and colleagues decided to take advantage of the fact that cancers don't just produce one antigen and antibody reaction, but a whole raft of them. The researchers extracted the antigens from a piece of small cell lung cancer to test for antibodies in people with the same type of cancer. They confirmed previous findings that no antibody, in isolation, can be used to reliably test for the cancer. The problem is that certain antibodies are also found in people with other types of cancer, and some were even found, albeit rarely, in people with no cancer. They report their findings in the February issue of the European Respiratory Journal. [View Article](#)

Bush's AIDS Pledge 'Unexpected'

President Bush, under fire from AIDS groups for what they call his neglect of the epidemic, asked Congress in his State of the Union Address to triple AIDS spending in Africa and Haiti to \$15 billion over five years. AIDS campaigners and officials, taken by surprise, quickly welcomed the plan though some expressed skepticism and questioned where the money would come from. "I ask the Congress to commit \$15 billion over the next five years, including nearly \$10 billion in new money, to turn the tide against AIDS in the most afflicted nations of Africa and the Caribbean," Bush said. "This comprehensive plan will prevent 7 million new AIDS infections, treat at least 2 million people with life-extending drugs and provide humane care for millions of people suffering from AIDS and for children orphaned by AIDS," Bush added. On its Web site, the White House said the plan would target Botswana, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. [View Article](#)

Exercise Like a Drug in Heart Disease, Study Finds

23 January – Reuters reported US researchers say exercise can act like a drug on the blood vessels, reducing the risk of heart disease by literally getting the blood flowing. It works in a surprising way, reducing inflammation, which has recently joined high blood pressure and high cholesterol as a leading known cause of heart disease, the researchers said. The blood stresses the walls of blood vessels as it passes over them, reducing inflammation in a way similar to high doses of steroids. "Inflammation in blood vessels has been linked to atherosclerosis, a hardening of the arteries, and here we see how the physical force of blood flow can cause cells to produce their own anti-inflammatory response," Scott Diamond of the University of Pennsylvania's Institute for Medicine and Engineering, said in a statement. The findings could help explain why exercise works so well to reduce the risk of heart disease, Diamond said. "We're not talking about running a marathon here. We're just talking about getting the blood moving at high arterial levels," he said. [View Article](#)

Leanness, Not Diet, May Be Key to Long Life

24 January – Reuters reported dieters got a bit of hope from a study that shows a change in a single gene in mice allows them to eat as much as they want while staying thin -- and live longer. Dr. C. Ronald Kahn of the Joslin Diabetes Center at Harvard Medical School and colleagues genetically engineered a mouse that lacked a gene called fat-specific insulin receptor. This change limited the action of insulin on fat cells. The mice, which they nicknamed FIRKO mice (for fat-specific insulin receptor knock-outs), fed freely without gaining much fat and also lived longer than normal mice. They had 50 to 70 percent less fat, no matter what they ate, and also were less likely to develop diabetes than normal mice. They lived on average 134 days, or 18 percent longer than normal mice. By the age of 30 months half the normal mice had died but 80 percent of the FIRKO mice were still alive. The study is published in the journal *Science*. [View Article](#)

Preparing for a Bioterrorist Attack: Legal and Administrative Strategies

01 February – The Journal of Emerging Infectious diseases published an article that proposes and discusses legal and administrative preparations for a bioterrorist attack. To perform the duties expected of public health agencies during a disease outbreak caused by bioterrorism, an agency must have a sufficient number of employees and providers at work and a good communications system between staff in the central offices of the public health agency and those in outlying or neighboring agencies and hospitals. The article proposes strategies for achieving these objectives as well as for removing legal barriers that discourage agencies, institutions, and persons from working together for the overall good of the community. Issues related to disease surveillance and special considerations regarding public health restrictive orders are discussed. [View Article](#)

Research May Provide Clue to Ultra Quick Healing

22 January – Canoe Health reported researchers at McGill University in Montreal have found that a growth factor involved in the development of tumors speeds up the healing of wounds. The factor, progranulin, speeds up the body's ability to clean up and repair wounds, a process that is particularly difficult for people with poor circulation such as the elderly and diabetics. "It would be very useful to find ways to promote that process. That's the long-term aim," said

Andrew Bateman, lead author on the resulting article, which is being published in the Feb. 1 issue of Nature Medicine. The journal has already published the paper online. [View Article](#)

Reusing Water Bottles May Pose Health Risk

26 January – The Toronto Star reported while people may think they're doing a good deed for the environment when they reuse water bottles, researchers say they could be risking their health. Dangerous bacteria and potentially toxic plastic compounds have been found in the types of water bottles typically reused in classrooms and workplaces. A study of water bottles at a Calgary elementary school found bacteria in kids' bottles that would prompt health officials to issue boil-water advisories, had the samples come from a tap. Researchers discovered bacterial contamination in about a third of the samples collected from kids' water bottles at the school. Some samples even showed evidence of fecal coliforms. The bacteria likely came from the kids' hands and mouths over time as they repeatedly used the same bottles without washing them or allowing them to dry. And a study conducted in the United States suggests the kind of thorough washing that could kill bacteria might make the bottles unsafe in another way. Frequent washing might accelerate the breakdown of the plastic, potentially causing chemicals to leach into the water, the study found. [View Article](#)

Scientists Discover Natural Antibiotic in Human Gut

27 January – Reuters reported researchers have found a potent antibacterial protein that is made naturally by the human body. The protein, dubbed Ang4, is created by cells in the intestines, according to a study published in the advance online version of the journal Nature Immunology. It is likely that Ang4 normally plays a role in protecting the lining of the intestines. "We showed that Ang4 kills many different types of gut bacteria," said Hooper, a researcher at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri. "We think that Ang4 is part of the arsenal that use to keep bacteria from getting too close to the intestinal lining and causing damage." Hooper and her colleagues also found that Ang4 was a potent killer of *Listeria monocytogenes*, which has been implicated in recent cases of severe food poisoning. [View Article](#)

Too Little, Too Much Sleep Linked to Heart Disease

27 January – MSNBC News reported too little or too much sleep might raise the risk of developing heart disease, according to a study of nearly 72,000 nurses. Women who averaged five hours or less of sleep a night were 39 percent more likely to develop heart disease than women who got eight hours. Those sleeping six hours a night had an 18 percent higher risk of developing blocked arteries than the eight-hour sleepers. And nine or more hours of sleep was associated with a 37 percent higher risk of heart disease. Researchers could not explain the last finding but suggested those women might have slept more because of underlying illnesses. "People should start thinking of adequate sleep not as a luxury but more as a component of a healthy lifestyle," said Dr. Najib Ayas, a sleep disorders specialist who was at Harvard-affiliated Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston when he led the study. The researchers suggested that getting enough sleep might be nearly as important to heart health as eating right and exercising. And they pointed out a recent poll that found that about one in three Americans has long-term sleep deprivation. The study is published in the Archives of Internal Medicine. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Angola: 41 New Cases of Tuberculosis

28 January – AllAfrica.com reported at least 141 new cases of tuberculosis were recorded over the last three months in Angola's southern Huila province. This brings the total number of cases to 629, the TB combat supervisor in the province, Pedro Gaspar, said. He mentioned the massive return of displaced populations to their areas of origin, coupled with scarce food in sanitary units, as the main source of new cases of tuberculosis. With a view to reducing the prevalence in the region, the Public Health Department is considering starting a program to fight against tuberculosis. This will include the upgrading of health workers, diagnosis, prevention and treatment. [View Article](#)

Anthrax Outbreak North West South Africa: 50 Admitted to Hospital

26 January – ProMed reported the sixth outbreak of anthrax in the North West Province in 3 months has been reported at Makouspan village in Mooifontein. The first outbreak occurred at villages near the Ramatlabama border with Botswana. Nearly 50 people were admitted to hospital after eating contaminated meat. Edna Molewa, the North West Agriculture MEC, says the provincial government is taking precautions to prevent anthrax from spreading. [View Report](#)

Cholera Kills 12 in Mozambique

27 January – New 24 reported a cholera outbreak has killed 12 people and infected hundreds more in northern Mozambique, where floods that have swept away thousands of homes are speeding the spread of the disease. Virginia Saldanha, head of the health department in Sofala province, told Reuters a total of 402 cases had been reported in the past three weeks, but all the deaths had come in the past seven days. Cholera is the latest in a string of disasters to hit the impoverished southern African country, which last week reported the first deaths from starvation amid widespread food shortages. "The disease is spreading rapidly in the northern Cabo Delgado and Nampula provinces. Two people have died from a total of 67 cases reported," Saldanha said. [View Article](#)

Kenya: Government Sends Alert On Disease Outbreak

28 January – AllAfrica.com reported the Government of Kenya has issued an alert over the outbreak of communicable diseases across the country. Health Minister Charity Ngilu warned yesterday that parts of the country will experience an outbreak of malaria, cholera, dysentery and diarrhea. She said the outbreak will be occasioned by the change of weather patterns across the country. The Minister said parts of the country affected by the rains are Coast, Rift Valley, Nyanza, North Eastern and parts of Western Province. Ngilu said the government has already distributed the required medicines to all epidemic-prone areas. [View Article](#)

Many Austrians May Have High Homocysteine

24 January – Reuters reported as many as one in three Austrians may have high levels of homocysteine, an amino acid suspected of increasing the risk of heart disease, doctors said.

This figure, which came from a relatively small study, is much higher than the previous estimate that one in ten Austrians have raised levels of the molecule. "We were not surprised to find that many people had high levels of homocysteine because half of all the deaths in Austria are due to heart and circulatory disease and homocysteine has been associated with these diseases," the head of the study, Dr. Bernhard Zirm, told Reuters Health. "However, we were shocked to find it was as many as one in three," added Zirm. The results of the study support the importance of a healthy lifestyle and a diet that is rich in folic acid, Zirm said. Participants who consumed the least folic acid and vitamins B6 and B12 had the highest homocysteine levels. [View Article](#)

Republic of the Congo: Ebola Virus Again Found in Dead Apes

24 January – ProMed reported a chimpanzee was found dead in the remote Odzala National Park of the Republic of the Congo last week. Apollo, the world's best-known gorilla, is missing, and Ebola virus may be the culprit. The alpha male of a 24-member family hasn't been seen since early December 2002, when 2 members of his family were found dead -- along with 3 other endangered western lowland gorillas and several chimps. Less than a year ago, contact with a dead ape was blamed for an Ebola outbreak in the area that killed at least 53 people. Specialists have again found Ebola virus in the dead apes. [View Report](#)

Seven People Die of Strange Disease in Ghana

24 January – ProMED reported a strange disease has been spreading across Ghana's Volta Region, leaving 7 people dead, according to a report reaching here from Ghana's capital Accra. The report quoted Nicholas Ahiadorme, chief executive of North Tongu District, Volta Region, as saying that 10 more people suffering from the disease were receiving treatment in the hospitals. He said symptoms associated with the disease, which has mostly affected children, include severe headache, stiff neck, running nose, and violent behaviors. According to the district official, symptoms of the disease were being reported in pockets of settlements in the district. Local medical authorities said that samples of fluids were being analyzed. [View Report](#)

UK Troop Food: Poison Suspicions

24 January – Reuters reported British authorities suspect that Islamic militants arrested this month may have been planning to use the deadly toxin ricin to poison the food of a British military base, U.S. officials said. While there was no hard evidence, it was one theory that British investigators were pursuing because one of the suspects arrested worked at a food company, officials said. U.S. authorities are not involved in the case and consider it a British matter, officials said. The New York Times reported that one of the suspects worked for a food preparation company and had been in contact with individuals who worked on at least one British base. Officials told the newspaper that they did not know the identity of the suspect or which base may have been a target. [View Article](#)

USCENTCOM

Emergence of Vancomycin-Resistant *E. faecium* in Karachi, Pakistan

26 January – ProMED reported according to a study from Pakistan, vancomycin-resistant enterococcus (VRE) has not been reported previously in Pakistan until vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus faecium* was isolated from the clinical specimens of 6 patients admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) and neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) of the Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi. A total of 10 strains of vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus faecium* were isolated. All the strains showed high-level resistance to both glycopeptides (vancomycin and teicoplanin) with a vancomycin minimum inhibitory concentration greater than 256 mg/L. All isolates had the *vanA* gene detected by polymerase chain reaction. The contour-clamped homogeneous electric field (CHEF) pattern demonstrated that all but one of the isolates were of a single clone, suggesting that they were derived from common source. The researchers concluded the use of vancomycin and prolonged hospitalization were common features in all cases investigated. [View Report](#)

USNORTHCOM

Agent Orange and a Cancer Are Linked, Study Shows

23 January – The New York Times reported exposure to high levels of Agent Orange, the widely used defoliant in the Vietnam War, is associated with a slight increase in the incidence of a form of leukemia called chronic lymphocytic leukemia, researchers have determined. As a result of the study, the Veterans Affairs Department announced that it would extend benefits to veterans with the disease. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs said the incidents of the cancer among veterans were relatively few, though he estimated that his department would hear from as many as 1,000 new patients a year. Because of the findings, veterans will not have to prove that their illnesses stemmed from Agent Orange exposure. Evidence of military service and a physician's diagnosis will be sufficient. [View Article](#)

CDC Releases Guidance for Clinicians on Smallpox Vaccination and Adverse Reactions

28 January – The CDC has released guidelines for clinicians on smallpox vaccination and adverse reactions. This guide is for the evaluation and treatment of patients with complications from smallpox vaccination in the pre-outbreak setting. The guidelines can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/wk/MMWRDispatch1-24-03.pdf>

Drug Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* spreads in L.A.

28 January – ProMed reported there is an outbreak of methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* [MRSA] in Los Angeles County, California. Although the outbreak seems confined primarily to gay men, doctors say at least one woman contracted the infection, probably from a

male sex partner. Because they still know so little about the extent of the outbreak, they can't predict how many people it may eventually affect. The infection, which causes nasty-looking boils, deep abscesses, and widespread surrounding inflammation, has proved impervious to common antibiotics. Although it appears to be spread primarily by skin-to-skin contact, including sex, its origins and precise mode of transmission remain a mystery. Doctors treating it caution that it could also be contracted at health clubs, steam rooms, and other warm, moist environments. "The concern is this organism could spread to and cause disease in the community at large," said Dr. Peter Ruane, an infectious disease specialist in Los Angeles. "It seems to be able to attack normal skin in healthy people." They also found that the strain contains a powerful toxin called Panton-Valentine leukocidin seen in resistant Staph outbreaks in France and in this country. No one knows whether that toxin is responsible for the microbe's ability to break through the skin. The county is sending samples to the CDC for further tests and to see if the same strain has been seen elsewhere. The epidemiologists also have seen the same strain for many months in an ongoing outbreak associated with what they will only describe as a "large institution." That outbreak remains under investigation. [View Report](#)

Emerging Pattern of Rabies Deaths and Increased Viral Infectivity

01 February – The Journal of Emerging Infectious diseases published an article that discusses rabies deaths in the United States. Most human rabies deaths in the United States can be attributed to unrecognized exposures to rabies viruses associated with bats, particularly those associated with two infrequently encountered bat species (*Lasiurus noctivagans* and *Pipistrellus subflavus*). These human rabies cases tend to cluster in the southeastern and northwestern United States. In these regions, most rabies deaths associated with bats in nonhuman terrestrial mammals are also associated with virus variants specific to these two bat species rather than more common bat species; outside of these regions, more common bat rabies viruses contribute to most transmissions. The preponderance of rabies deaths connected with the two uncommon *L. noctivagans* and *P. subflavus* bat rabies viruses is best explained by their evolution of increased viral infectivity. [View Article](#)

FDA: Warning on Asthma Drug Serevent

24 January - The Associated Press reported the FDA warned that some patients using a popular asthma medication are more likely to face life-threatening complications and more likely to die from their symptoms than those who are not taking the drug. Officials emphasized that problems from the drug Serevent were rare, and they said the drug's benefits outweigh the risks. They cautioned that it is dangerous to abruptly stop taking the drug and recommended that concerned patients talk with their doctors. Serevent, an aerosol spray made by GlaxoSmithKline, opens the airways to help asthma patients breathe more easily. Patients use it twice a day to prevent attacks. Due to concerns about the drug, Glaxo launched a large study to compare the number of life-threatening experiences, such as intubations and mechanical ventilation, and the number of asthma-related deaths in patients taking the drug vs. the number of such occurrences in patients given a placebo. The study found a greater risk of problems and a greater risk of death among black patients, and found a disparity in deaths among those who were not using a companion drug aimed at controlling inflammation. [View Article](#)

Flying SnifferSTAR May Aid Civilians and US Military

23 January – Sandia announced a half-ounce ‘sniffer’ intended to ride on small aerial drones to detect possible gas attacks on cities and military bases has been created by researchers at Sandia National Laboratories in partnership with Lockheed Martin Corporation. The patented device, which detects nerve gases and blister agents, operates on only half a watt of electrical power, says Sandia researcher Doug Adkins. While other gas monitors exist, “this is small, lightweight, low power, and offers rapid analysis,” says Adkins. “Rapid analysis currently is not possible with any other package near this size.” Discussions are underway with a US company that produces drone aircraft to include the device among sensors designed to detect biological and radiological threats. The device also has possibilities for use in or near the ventilation systems of buildings, or, with addition of a small pump, on posts surrounding military bases.

[View Report](#)

Health Data Monitored for Bioterror Warning

27 January – The New York Times reported the government is building a computerized network that will collect and analyze health data of people in eight major cities to secure early warning of a bioterror attack, administration officials say. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is to lead the multimillion-dollar surveillance effort, which officials expect to become the cornerstone of a national network to spot disease outbreaks by tracking data like doctor reports, emergency room visits and sales of flu medicine. "Our goal is to have a model that any city could pick up and apply," a senior administration official said of the plan. Officials would not disclose the program's cost or which cities will be involved. In ambition and potential usefulness, the health network goes far beyond an environmental surveillance system, disclosed by the administration last week that will sniff the air for dangerous germs. The emerging health monitoring network, officials and experts say, will provide information that could save lives if terrorists strike with deadly germs like smallpox or anthrax. In detecting attacks, a head start of even a day or two can greatly lower death rates by letting doctors treat rapidly and prevent an isolated outbreak from becoming an epidemic. [View Article](#)

JCAHO Taps Expert Panel to Strengthen Infection Control Standards

22 January – A JCAHO press release reported an expert group of physicians, nurses, risk managers and other health care professionals has been tapped by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) to consider and recommend ways in which current JCAHO infection control standards can be strengthened to help prevent the occurrence and devastating impacts of nosocomial infections. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that more than two million patients annually acquire an infection while hospitalized in U.S. hospitals for other health problems and that 88,000 die as a direct or indirect result of these infections. In addition to the human toll, the CDC reports that efforts to treat these infections add nearly \$5 billion to health care costs every year. The 20-member expert panel, which will meet for the first time in February, will be asked both to recommend enhancements to the standards and to suggest ways in which the Joint Commission can better ensure that accredited organizations are truly in compliance with the standards. [View Article](#)

Nicotine-Reduced Cigarettes Reach Market

27 January – Newsweek reported the first tobacco CEO to acknowledge smoking is addictive is offering a new cigarette made with genetically modified tobacco that lets smokers choose their level of nicotine. Vector Tobacco Inc. stops short of marketing its Quest cigarettes as a smoking cessation product -- a claim that could draw the regulatory attention of the Food and Drug Administration. The cigarettes are, however, designed to allow smokers to cut back on nicotine, the addictive element in tobacco. "The purpose of this product is to help people get to a nicotine-free environment, where they can have zero nicotine in their system. Then they can decide what to do from that point forward," said Bennett LeBow, who runs parent company Vector Group Ltd. The company is spending \$15 million on advertising for Quest in seven Mid-Atlantic and Midwest states beginning Monday. It also is funding research at Duke University on how Quest affects smokers' nicotine intake and urge to smoke. Although the company says Quest contains only trace amounts of nicotine, it makes no claims that the cigarette reduces carbon monoxide or the chemicals that increase the risk of cancer heart disease, emphysema and birth defects. [View Article](#)

Norovirus Activity; United States, 2002

23 January – ProMed reported during the period June to December 2002, an increased number of outbreaks of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) were reported on cruise ships sailing into U.S. ports (1). In addition, since October 2002, several states have noted an increase in outbreaks of AGE consistent clinically and epidemiologically with norovirus infection, particularly in institutional settings such as nursing homes. Data from CDC indicate the possible emergence of a predominant circulating norovirus strain. [View Complete Report](#)

Sarin Responsible For Gulf Syndrome?

24 January – CBS News reported the head of the Veterans Affairs Department said he will ask researchers to investigate possible links between sarin gas and symptoms seen in Persian Gulf War veterans after a study found the nerve gas affected behavior and organ functions in laboratory mice. For years, many scientists have blamed Gulf War Syndrome on stress. Veterans and some researchers, however, attribute the health problems to toxic substances the veterans encountered in the Gulf, including sarin. Others suggest it may be a combination of factors. The Institute of Medicine has been reviewing research of substances considered possible culprits in illnesses suffered by Gulf War veterans. Thus far it has reported that not enough scientific information exists to determine whether exposure to low levels of sarin nerve gas had long-term health effects in people. [View Article](#)

Smallpox Vaccine Trial in Children Nixed Because of Supply Outlook

27 January - CIDRAP News reported top federal health officials have turned down a proposal to test the Dryvax smallpox vaccine in small children, but not because of public objections. The trial is no longer needed because the current campaign to vaccinate military personnel and healthcare workers means Dryvax won't be available for use in children, officials said. Dryvax has been the foundation of the federal stockpile of smallpox vaccine. The government has about 15 million doses, but the current vaccination effort is expected to use millions of doses in the next several months. The decision not to approve the trial was made by Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner

Mark B. McClellan. The proposed trial, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, would have tested Dryvax in standard and diluted concentrations in children aged 2 to 5 years. The decision applies only to this trial and does not rule out future research on smallpox vaccines in children. [View Article](#)

Some Troops Freeze Sperm Before Deploying

27 January – USAToday reported some servicemen heading to the Middle East are doing something only modern-day military fighters would consider. They are freezing their sperm before they ship out. Fear of vaccines and possible exposure to chemical and biological agents has prompted at least 80 men in the military to visit laboratories that process and store sperm. Women leaving for the war zone don't have a similar last-minute option because storing eggs has a low success rate, the labs say. The military says there is no data linking mandatory vaccinations, or any other substance soldiers might encounter, and infertility. But thousands of veterans of the Gulf War 12 years ago complained of maladies ranging from recurring headaches and muscle pain to infertility. Many of them attribute their illnesses to a combination of the anthrax vaccine and pollutants, pesticides and chemicals they believe they encountered during the war. [View Article](#)

Ten Ohio Horses Dead; Possible Equine Herpesvirus-1 Outbreak

24 January – ProMed reported at least 10 horses have died or have been euthanized at the University of Findlay in Findlay, Ohio, after battling a respiratory and neurologic illness. Preliminary polymerase chain reaction tests completed on tissue samples from affected horses by the Ohio Department of Agriculture Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory this morning came back as "presumptive positive" for equine herpesvirus type-1 (EHV-1). Officials from the veterinary services department at the University of Findlay and epidemiologists and scientists from The Ohio State University are working together to treat at least 11 affected horses with supportive care and to determine the source of infection. [View Report](#)

USPACOM

Flu Epidemic Hitting Japan This Winter

26 January – Japan Today reported a flu epidemic has hit Japan, causing nearly 500 schools nationwide to be closed in one week, the most in recent history, health ministry sources said Saturday. The number of flu cases as of 18 January stood around 39,000, with 19,000 of the people coming down with the virus, mainly type-A Hong Kong flu, between 12 January and 18 January according to a recent report by the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry. By prefecture, Osaka had the most cases with 7,900, followed by Hokkaido, Saitama and Tokyo, the report said, adding that Iwate and Ishikawa had no patients. The sources fear the epidemic will continue to spread. [View Article](#)

GM Cheese from Cow Clones

27 January – BBC News reported cows are being modified to produce drugs and improved milk. Scientists in New Zealand have created the world's first cow clones that produce special milk

that can increase the speed and ease of cheese making. The researchers in Hamilton say their herd of nine transgenic cows makes highly elevated levels of milk proteins (casein) with improved processing properties and heat stability. Cows have previously been engineered to produce proteins for medical purposes, but this is the first time the milk itself has been genetically enhanced. The scientists hope the breakthrough will transform the cheese industry, and - if widened - the techniques could also be used to "tailor" milk for human consumption. But opponents of GM foods continue to doubt whether such products will be safe. [View Article](#)

Rain Brings Relief from Australian Fires

27 January – BBC News reported light rain and cooler temperatures brought relief to firefighters and residents battling fires across Australia, but forecasters warned that temperatures would rise again mid-week. In the country's southeast, where blistering heat over the weekend fueled fires that destroyed up to 20 homes, more than 1,000 people who were evacuated were to return to their homes, although resort towns such as Cooma and Jindabyne remained under threat. But in the northwest, rain over the weekend brought little respite. Rescue workers were grappling with floods on Monday, following heavy tropical rains. And authorities warned that after a month of wild fires in southeast Australia, many blazes were still out of control. Some 80 blazes continue to burn across New South Wales, including one in the Royal National Park bordering the southeastern suburbs of Australia's largest city, Sydney. The fires have been fed by bone-dry conditions, following 10 months of El Nino-aggravated drought. [View Article](#)

USSOUTHCOM

New *Aedes* Species Found in Nicaragua

23 January – ProMed reported the Department of Health of Nicaragua announced that it has detected in the north of the country larvae of the mosquito *Aedes albopictus*, also known as "Asian Tiger" and potential transmitter of 23 dangerous diseases. It is the first time they have detected larvae of this mosquito there. Juan Jose Amador, the director of Epidemiology of the Department of Health, stated that the larvae of the mosquito were discovered in the Potosi municipality in the province of Chinandega, on the frontier with Honduras. He also reported that the mosquito, which transmits diseases like yellow fever, encephalitis, dengue, and West Nile Virus, comes from Asia and has already been detected in Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and El Salvador. [View Report](#)

Please contact the below-listed POC for suggested improvements and/or comments regarding this report. This report is also available on the USACHPPM website at <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/Hiouupdate/>.

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