

# REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

December 29, 2022 - January 4, 2023

## WEEKLY EVENTS

- There have been reports of people impersonating Department of Disease Control officials to facilitate the illegal sales of vaccines. Under their false claims, they use personal phone numbers to call and request victims to transfer funds through an automated system and then charge operating fees. The Department of Disease Control reiterates that it does not make these requests. The public should be cautious of scammers and the DDC is consulting with officials to further investigate these cases.
- The Government Pharmaceutical Organization (GPO) successfully developed a new antiviral drug against COVID-19 under the name, Monovir, in the form of 200 milligram capsules. Originally, all antivirals had to be imported from abroad. The new drug has passed international quality standards and studies show that it has similar efficacy as the original antiviral drug. The distribution of Monovir to public and private hospitals began at the end of December 2022.
- A recent academic report from the Mekong River Commission, states that the Mekong River has high levels of plastics pollution. Although this pollution is less visible than solid waste, microplastics are more dangerous and are harmful to the body's immune system, human growth and reproduction system. The Mekong River Commission has called on the four lower Mekong River Basin countries, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam, to establish a joint, permanent mechanism to reduce plastics pollution.

## BEWARE OF SCRUB TYPHUS

From January 1, 2022 to December 29, 2022, there were 6,100 cases of scrub typhus and two deaths according to the surveillance report from the Department of Disease Control. The most recent death occurred when a 21-year-old man died on December 28, 2022 in Phitsanulok province.

Scrub typhus is a disease transmitted by infected chiggers (larval mites). Larval mites often live in grassland shrubs or in scrub forests. When an animal passes through their habitat, the larval mites can attach themselves to a host and feed on the skin. If the vector is carrying the bacteria, the pathogen can then infect the host upon entry into the skin wound. The number of scrub typhus cases normally spikes during the winter season when people travel to forest areas for camping and there is subsequently increased contact between humans and larval mites. The larval mite can crawl on clothes such as pant legs and will often hide under the clothes to feed on the skin of its host and transmit the pathogen. About 6 - 21 days after infection, a high fever may onset. Some people may have a high fever that lasts 2-3 weeks with severe headache, rash, ocular pain, chills, loss of appetite, fatigue, or constipation. One of three patients develop a wound that resembles a cigarette burn, at the site of the wound. The wound is dark red, has an indent and is not itchy. If not properly treated, fatal complications may arise.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Public health officials should publicize to residents and warn tourists who enter forested areas and especially those who go camping in tents of scrub typhus. People should try to stay in open areas and avoid habitats of larval mites such as bushes and scrub forests, and should wear clothing that completely covers their skin. Insect repellent should be applied. When returning from a potentially risky area clothes should be washed and cleaned thoroughly. If within two weeks, symptoms arise such as headache or fever, the patient should see a doctor and notify them about their travel history in order to receive the right treatment.

## INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

Multisectoral Capacity Development Program for Public Health Emergency Detection and Response in Border Areas

Office of International Cooperation, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand  
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CONTACT  
oicddc@gmail.com  
02-5903832  
www.ddc.go.th/oic

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