

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

December 14 - 20, 2023

WEEKLY EVENTS

- The United Nations designates December 18 as "International Migrants Day." To emphasize the importance of access to healthcare services for all international migrant workers in Thailand there is currently the "M-FUND" (Migrant Fund) project initiated by the Dreamloplacements Foundation, a non-profit, social enterprise health fund for providing healthcare to migrants who lack government health insurance. M-FUND started as a pilot project in September 2017 along the Thai-Myanmar border in Mae Sot, Tak province. Subsequently, it expanded its coverage to various provinces, including Sa Kaeo, Kanchanaburi, Chiang Rai, Ubon Ratchathani, Trat, and other parts of Tak. Migrant workers interested in this service can register with M-FUND officers working in the communities by contributing a monthly fee of 100 Baht per person (basic plan). This provides coverage for quality outpatient medical care up to 5,000 Baht per year and inpatient services up to 45,000 Baht per year. As of November 2017, over 200 government hospitals have collaborated with the project, and since September 2017, around 69,000 international migrant workers have registered, covering 82,000 outpatient visits and 12,000 inpatient visits. If all migrant workers in Thailand can access these health services, it would significantly improve their quality of life.

THE RISK FOR **LEISHMANIASIS** IS NEARER THAN YOU MAY THINK: PREVENTION IS ESSENTIAL

The Week 50 disease report (December 11-17, 2023) from the Department of Disease Control Department, Ministry of Public Health included two cases of leishmaniasis. The patients were Thai males, aged 35 and 52, residing in Udon Thani and Surat Thani provinces, respectively. The first patient recently returned from Israel, while the second patient had a history of HIV and kala-azar (visceral leishmaniasis). The World Health Organization designated leishmaniasis as one of the six emerging infectious diseases in tropical areas that need swift elimination. In 2014, Thailand, along with Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Myanmar, signed a memorandum of understanding to eradicate the disease and reduce the number of patients at the district and sub-district levels to fewer than 1 person per 10,000 population by 2017.

Leishmaniasis is a disease that occurs in vertebrates such as cattle, buffalo, mice, squirrels, dogs, etc. The sandfly serves as the vector that transmits the pathogen from infected animals to humans. Sandflies inhabit dark, cool, and humid places, such as old brick piles, termite mounds, rotten wood, cracks in walls, soil covered with leaves in dense forests and areas near animal pens. After sucking the blood of animals infected with the disease and then infecting humans via bites, symptoms can appear in three forms: cutaneous, mucocutaneous, and visceral. The incubation period is uncertain, ranging from 2 to 3 weeks to several months, years, or even longer. Patients may experience intermittent illness, chronic fever, intermittent bleeding, anemia, jaundice, weight loss, hepatomegaly, and other symptoms. The skin around the bite may develop red pimples and ulcerate without pain. Leishmaniasis is curable, but treatment takes a long time. If complications such as pneumonia, anemia, gastric and intestinal ulcers, or inflammation occur and are not promptly treated, death may result. Prevention is the best method.



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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

The local livestock and public health offices should collaborate to disseminate information to the public about leishmaniasis including the causes, symptoms, and self-protection measures. Health offices should actively search for both symptomatic and asymptomatic patients, providing prompt and effective treatment until recovery. It is recommended that the community work together to eliminate sandflies by improving the environment in and around homes. Domestic animals such as cattle or buffalo should be kept at least 10 meters away from residences. In cases where animals are kept close to homes, the animals should sleep in enclosures or wear chemical-coated neck collars at night to prevent sandfly bites. Individuals should protect themselves by using insect-repellent, wearing fully covered clothing when entering forested areas, and avoiding outside activities in the early evening during the sandflies' active feeding period. People with HIV should take precautions to avoid sandfly bites and refrain from engaging in risky sexual behaviors. Thai workers returning from disease-endemic countries in East and Southeast Asia or those exhibiting symptoms related to leishmaniasis should promptly seek medical attention and disclose their risk history for immediate examination.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

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

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Supported by the Thailand MOPH - US CDC Collaboration on Public Health

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