

Media Release

New disease threats to Australia: Chikungunya, Hendra/Nipah and more Are we ready? A new intelligence-gathering team will have the answers

- Media briefing 11 am, Monday, 15 September, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney
- Parliamentary forum, Tuesday, 16 September, Australian Parliament House, Canberra

Hundreds of people have died from Chikungunya disease. Millions have been infected across the Indian Ocean and South East Asia. Australian mosquitoes are capable of carrying it. But most of us have never heard it.

Tassie devils, frogs, woylies, abalone, kangaroos and other native animals are being struck down by new diseases.

And you could think that bats are using biological warfare to fight back against human incursion – Hendra, Nipah, bat lyssavirus have appeared and killed.

Hendra has shown us that today's wildlife issue can become tomorrow's livestock and health issue.

What's happening? Find out at a Science Media Centre Briefing at the Powerhouse Museum, 11 am Monday, 15 September with:

• **Professor John Edwards**, *Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre*

Emerging diseases in Australia: lessons from Hendra virus, equine influenza and current livestock disease threats.

• **Dr Peter Daszak**, *Executive Director of the Consortium for Conservation Medicine, New York*

Emerging diseases – what are they, where are they coming from? The role of humans in the arrival of exotic pathogens and the movement of disease by the wildlife trade.

• **Julie Hall**, *Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response WHO Western Pacific Regional Office*

The human diseases that are of greatest concern in our region and the impact of climate change, including the appearance and spread of Chikungunya. What we can do to help reduce the threat, and what pose the greatest risk?

• **Karrie Rose**, *Australian Registry of Wildlife Health, Taronga Conservation Society Australia*

How can we identify and deal with disease threats to native wildlife?

And learn of a new organisation to collect intelligence and help Australia prepare.

John Edwards will chair the Biosecurity Risk Intelligence Scanning Committee

BRISC scan the broader biosecurity milieu to identify changes in the national and international environment that will alter Australia's risk profile.

This information will help disease managers in the biosecurity sector identify research questions, determine priorities and identify emerging issues and trends.

In addition to scanning, BRISC will undertake specific risk assessments addressing emerging disease issues that may affect Australia. Outlines on Chikungunya; Hendra/Nipah; and bluetongue are online.

For more information and to join the briefing online visit www.scienceinpublic.com.

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