

India worst hit by diseases from animals

75% Of Emerging Ailments Are Of Animal Origin

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: India has topped a list of countries worst affected by zoonotic diseases (those originating from animals).

The first-of-its-kind global study mapping human-animal diseases has pin pointed an “unlucky” 13 zoonoses that are responsible for 2.4 billion cases of human illness and 2.2 million deaths per year.

India is among the top geographical hotspots for such diseases, with 75% of recently-identified emerging infectious diseases affecting humans being that of animal origin. Globally, 60% of all human diseases and 75% of all emerging infectious diseases have been found to be zoonotic.

The study, conducted by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the Institute of Zoology (UK), said most of these human infections were acquired from the world’s 24-billion livestock.

“From cyst-causing tapeworms to avian flu, zoonoses present a major threat to human and animal health,” said Delia Grace, a veterinary epidemiologist with ILRI in Kenya and the study’s lead author. The study has ranked India at the top, followed by Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tanzania.

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1 India **2** Ethiopia **3** Nigeria **4** Tanzania

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India, the study predicted, will see the most rapid changes in pig and poultry farming with more animals being raised in concentrated spaces, raising the risk of the spread of diseases

The study found a 99% correlation between country levels of protein-energy malnutrition and the burden of zoonoses. India also has the worst protein-energy malnutrition. “Many poor livestock keepers are not even meeting their own protein and energy needs. Too often, animal diseases, including zoonotic diseases, confound their greatest efforts to escape poverty and hunger,” the study said.

Among the high-priority zoonoses studied were endemic ones such as brucellosis, which cause the vast majority of illness and death in poor countries, epidemic zoonoses, such as anthrax and Rift Valley fever and the relatively rare emerging zoonoses such as bird flu.