

## Of 'planes on diet and mad dogs

The US talk show host David Letterman once noted that if dogs ruled the world, the first new rule would be that all motorists should drive with their head out the window.

Dogs and other animals are such an integral part of our lives that it is difficult to imagine that stray and wild animals can cause deadly diseases, such as rabies. When travelling, especially to rural areas removed from immediate medical care, it is important to be aware of the signs of a rabid animal and what to do when exposed.

Also in this issue, we look at tuberculosis, which affects about one third of the world population and, just to lighten things up, we look at how airlines are now even washing their planes more frequently to save fuel.



Until next time, hamba kahle!

Dr Albie de Frey  
Medical Director  
Travel Doctor

BON VOYAGE

TRAVEL



August 2008



DOCTOR

### Paws for thought

From the dog's point of view, his master is an elongated and abnormally cunning dog. – Mabel Louise Robinson

### Your Questions Answered

If you have any questions or require more information on any of the articles posted, please feel free to send your questions to [info@traveldoctor.co.za](mailto:info@traveldoctor.co.za).

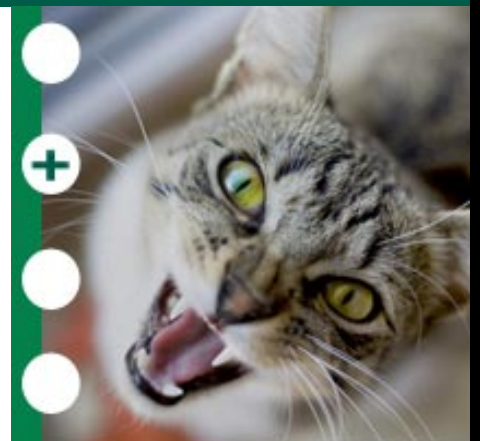


### The Travel Doctor expands to Honeydew

The Travel Doctor has opened a new clinic at the NHC Health Centre in Honeydew on the West Rand. We will be available for consultations on a range of travel health services for the local and international traveller. [More..](#)

### Beware the 'mad' dogs, cats and other animals...

A case of possible rabies exposure was reported recently in a Travel Doctor client working in Liberia. While, thankfully, the client did not contract rabies after being bitten by a stray cat, it does highlight the importance of rabies awareness, avoidance and possibly a full course of pre-exposure vaccinations if travelling to countries with endemic rabies, where it may be extremely difficult or impossible to source rabies vaccine. [More...](#)





### Getting to grips with TB

With an estimated 30% of the world's population infected with the tuberculosis (TB) germ, savvy international and local travellers need to be informed about this serious, but curable, condition. [More...](#)

### Airlines on 'diet'

With fuel costs tripling since 2000, airlines the world over are cutting costs in interesting ways. [More..](#)



### Occupational Health - Injury on duty - COID

When a South African employed person works outside South Africa and suffers an injury on duty, who is responsible for cost incurred? Will your Travel Insurance cover this, or are you covered by the COID (Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases) Act? [More...](#)

Bon Voyage is a monthly newsletter produced by The Hothouse Communications for Travel Doctor.  
0861 300 911 [www.traveldoctor.co.za](http://www.traveldoctor.co.za)

[+ SUBSCRIBE](#) [+ UNSUBSCRIBE](#) [+](#)



# The Travel Doctor expands to Honeydew

The Travel Doctor has opened a new clinic at the NHC Health Centre in Honeydew on the West Rand. We will be available for consultations on a range of travel health services for the local and international traveller.

The clinic offers malaria prophylaxis, travel vaccinations and is a registered Yellow Fever Vaccination centre. The Travel Doctor's very handy [travel kits](#) are now available from the clinic.

#### **Clinic hours**

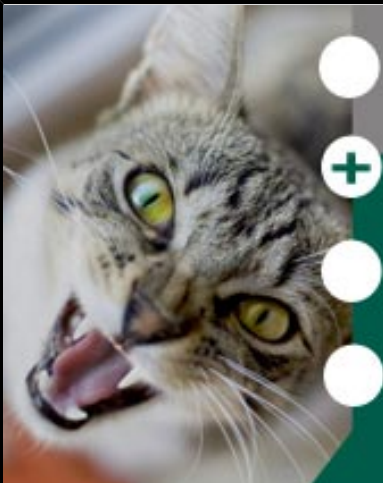
The Travel Doctor Honeydew will be open from 08:30 to 16:30 every weekday except Tuesdays, when the clinic will be open from 13:00 until 16:30.

#### **Travel Doctor Honeydew address details**

NHC Health Centre

Corner Christiaan De Wet Road and Dolfyn Street (opp. Northrand General Motors)

Make an appointment online at [www.traveldoctor.co.za](http://www.traveldoctor.co.za) or call us on 0861-300-911 or 011-801-5664.



# Beware the 'mad' dogs, cats and other animals...

A case of possible rabies exposure was reported recently in a Travel Doctor client working in Liberia. While, thankfully, the client did not contract rabies after being bitten by a stray cat, it does highlight the importance of rabies awareness, avoidance and possibly a full course of pre-exposure vaccinations if travelling to countries with endemic rabies, where it may be extremely difficult or impossible to source rabies vaccine.

Noel Coward noted in his famous song that "mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun..." Those of us that cherish time in the sunshine of remote and rural areas may find that we could share a privilege with mad dogs – rabies (and that's not even mentioning the sunburn!).

Dogs, and potentially any other warm-blooded animals can be afflicted with the virus that causes rabies. It is therefore a disease which visitors to remote, rural areas or everyone living in rabies-endemic areas should take special note of.

The safest option is to avoid contact with all wild animals when travelling in remote, rural areas and trekking in the bush – particularly animals that appear to be tame or sick! Bear in mind that bats may also be affected.

Rabies has been around for thousands of years and descriptions of patients suffering from rabies are found in literature dating from 300BC. Earlier terms to describe the condition include Hydrophobia or "Fear of Water", "Die Watervrees" in Afrikaans and "Rage" in French.

## Symptoms

Symptoms may occur within a week (if the bite occurred near the patient's brain, such as on the head or neck) or can take months or years to develop if the virus was implanted in the lower leg or foot. Death invariably follows within seven days of the onset of symptoms, which include muscle spasms of the mouth, neck and oesophagus, brought on by the sight – and even just the sound – of running water, hence the references to water in earlier terminology. Despite the loss of muscle control, the patient remains fully alert and conscious until shortly before death when they become comatose.

In animals the disease presents as furious (or irritable) rabies and dumb (or paralytic) rabies. Furious rabies is the most common form in animals, and in humans the disease takes a similar course. Infected animals demonstrate strange, often aggressive behaviour, running around, barking, yelping, and biting at anything and anyone in their way. Wild animals, such as meerkat, may demonstrate abnormal behaviour in this 'mad' phase and will, out of character, approach humans, seemingly fearless and sometimes appearing tame and loveable, prompting adults and children to touch them.

Dumb or paralytic rabies may pass through a short excitement stage, then paralysis of the muscles that control the jaws and swallow mechanism sets in, followed by general muscle paralysis and spasms.

All domestic animals, including cattle, sheep, goats and pet dogs and cats may be affected and should therefore be vaccinated. Other animals often implicated in the spread of rabies in southern Africa include mongoose, jackal and bat-eared foxes.

## How to avoid death from rabies

- Prevention is always better than cure - don't get bitten

Rabies can be transmitted by penetrating bites through intact skin, or licking of broken skin or intact mucous membrane. Avoiding

all animal contact is the best prevention.

- Wash the wound

If a person is bitten, licked or scratched by a potentially infected animal, wash the area immediately with lots of water and soap and then apply 70% alcohol or iodine that contains antiseptic. Avoid scrubbing as this may increase virus penetration into exposed nerve endings.

- Get vaccinated immediately and see a doctor

Every person that has been in contact with a potentially rabid animal **MUST** be seen by a doctor who is well versed in the correct management of rabies exposure according to World Health Organisation (WHO) protocols.

### **Where is rabies endemic?**

Rabies is endemic in most countries, except Western Europe and Australia, although Lyssavirus, a virus related to the rabies virus transmitted by bats, has been recorded in Australia and the US. In the US, however, raccoons are often the cause of rabies.

In South-East Asia, including Thailand, India and China, thousands of rabies deaths still occur, mostly caused by stray dogs, despite extensive programmes to eradicate rabies in the animal population.

Globally, as many as 10 million people receive post exposure immunisation every year.

### **Who should be vaccinated?**

- All pets - including dogs, cats, and domesticated wild animals such as meerkat (Vrystaters, neem kennis!)
- Persons with high occupational exposure, eg veterinarians
- Persons travelling to remote areas where medical facilities are unreliable and the potential for exposure is high
- Anyone exposed to a known or potentially rabid animal.

### **South African cases**

In South Africa human deaths from rabies are most recorded in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. Rabies deaths in humans increased sharply in recent years due to a lapse in Rabies prevention in animals.



# Getting to grips with TB

With an estimated 30% of the world's population infected with the tuberculosis (TB) germ, savvy international and local travellers need to be informed about this serious, but curable, condition.

TB is highly contagious and, if left untreated, a person with active TB can infect between 10 and 15 people in a year. While treatment is available, it remains a serious condition, which costs the lives of about two million people worldwide every year.

## Geographical distribution

Even though this disease is found in every country in the world, it mainly occurs in developing countries. It is estimated that over 90% of the world's TB is confined to Africa, Central and South America, and Asia. Significant disease outbreaks also occur in some of the island countries.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that the largest number of new TB cases in 2005 occurred in the South-East Asia Region, which accounted for 34% of cases globally. However, the estimated incidence rate in sub-Saharan Africa is nearly twice that of the South-East Asia Region, at nearly 350 cases per 100 000 population.

Travellers from industrialised to developing countries need to take specific cognisance of TB in the countries they visit.

## Infection and transmission

TB is a contagious disease. Like the common cold, it spreads through the air. Only people who are sick with TB are infectious. When infectious people cough, sneeze, talk or spit, they propel TB germs, known as bacilli, into the air. Infection can occur if only a small number of bacilli are inhaled, but air travellers should not be too concerned, as it is very rare for TB to be transmitted to passengers on commercial airlines.

Left untreated, each person with active TB will infect on average between 10 and 15 people every year. People infected with TB bacilli will not necessarily become sick with the disease – it is estimated that only between 5 to 10% of infected people get sick with TB. This is because the immune system "walls off" the TB bacilli which, protected by a thick waxy coat, can lie dormant for years. People get sick when their immune system is weakened, for example, as a result of the HIV virus, leukaemia, diabetes, or steroid usage.

## Symptoms

The classical triad of weight loss, night sweats and cough is often seen in many developing countries. However, patients may also present with symptoms associated with the infection of other organs, eg kidney, brain, bone or skin. The initial exposure to infection with TB may not cause any serious symptoms and the disease may be 'enclosed' by body defences at that time.

## Drug-resistant TB

Until 50 years ago, there were no medicines to cure TB. Now, there are, but inconsistent or partial treatment, when patients do not take all their medicines regularly for the required period because they start to feel better, have resulted in strains that are resistant to single or multiple drugs. Multi- and Extremely Multi Drug Resistant TB are of great concern and now frequently encountered in South Africa.

## Who is at risk?

- Close contacts of TB patients
- Children under five years
- Persons with diseases like diabetes and AIDS
- Persons who take excessive alcohol and who use drugs
- Persons with poor nutrition and lack of food
- Persons suffering from stress
- Persons living in poorly ventilated, over-crowded rooms

But, TB is no longer a disease of the poor and destitute.

What are the signs and symptoms of TB?

- A cough for longer than two weeks
- Chest pain
- Tiredness and malaise
- Loss of appetite and weight-loss
- Night sweats, even when it is cold
- Coughing up blood

#### **Treatment of TB**

##### **TB can be cured with little or no complications**

Medication must, however, be started as soon as possible and must be taken regularly according to instructions. It takes six months for TB to be cured completely, but within two weeks of starting treatment, the person will no longer spread the disease, but must complete the treatment.

*Sources: WHO website and KZN TB control programme*



# Airlines on 'diet'



With fuel costs tripling since 2000, airlines the world over are cutting costs in interesting ways.

Deutsche Lufthansa has begun washing planes more frequently as a way of cutting wind resistance and saving fuel, while Japan Airlines' in-flight magazines now have fewer pages. And, if you eat while on one of their flights, you will notice "slimmer" forks and spoons, and lighter porcelain in business class on international flights, since tiny bubbles were added to the porcelain to make it 20% lighter.

US Airways has eliminated snacks, while Singapore Airlines was looking into reducing water supplies to save weight. Southwest Airlines has started flying 72 seconds slower on Los Angeles flights, saving 32.9 litres of fuel for each of the airline's four daily non-stop flights on the 2 232km route.

The next step might be charging passengers per kilogramme. Southwest comes close, asking passengers to buy a second seat if their girth prevents the armrest from lowering.

*Source: Adapted from articles by Michael Janofsky and Daniel Rook published on 4 June and 7 July 2008 on busrep.co.za.*



# Occupational Health - Injury on duty - **COID**

When a South African employed person works outside South Africa and suffers an injury on duty, who is responsible for cost incurred? Will your Travel Insurance cover this, or are you covered by the COID (Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases) Act?

A person employed by a company based in South Africa will be covered under the COID Act for the first 12 months spent working outside South Africa. If staying longer than 12 months, this person should be registered with the relevant authorities as being an employee working outside South Africa, and only then will OI injury on duty be applicable.

However, COID does not cover aeromedical repatriation, only hospitalisation for work-related injuries and malaria – personal travel insurance remains essential. Travel Insurance will be covered in great detail in next month's Bon Voyage.