

Who Has 'Bubonic Plague' on Their 2024 Disaster Bingo Card?

This has been quite a decade for global pestilences.

The first one to hit was COVID, and that created a wave of panic that literally paralyzed the entire globe. The next one to hit was the bird flu. More than 100 million birds are dead, and now mammals all over the planet are getting infected. There is a lot of concern that humans could be next, and we will be watching future developments very closely. Two years ago, Mpox exploded on to the scene, and it rapidly circulated around the world.

Now a much deadlier new version has emerged in Africa, and global health authorities are quite alarmed about this. On top of everything else, this year we are dealing with the worst outbreak of dengue fever that we have ever witnessed. Millions have already been infected, and there have even been hundreds of cases here in the United States.

With everything else that has been going on, I didn't expect to be talking about bubonic plague. In the 14th century, bubonic plague killed somewhere between 30 to 50 percent of the population in some parts of Europe. Overall, it has been estimated that approximately 50 million people were wiped out.

So this is a disease that we definitely don't want to see make a major comeback. Unfortunately, it keeps popping up in various parts of the western United States.

On Monday, health officials in Colorado announced that there is a confirmed case of bubonic plague in Pueblo County. A person in Pueblo County, Colorado, about 100 miles south of Denver, has been infected with bubonic plague, local health

officials said Monday.

Last week, state and local officials identified the case based on preliminary test results. Trysten Garcia, a spokesperson for the Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment, said in an email Tuesday morning it was bubonic plague. Earlier announcements had been more general, stating it was "plague." The infection was initially reported on Friday. The department said the person was hospitalized for bubonic plague but their condition improved. Because plague is endemic locally, it's hard to pinpoint the source of infection, Garcia said.

Hopefully they identified that case in time.

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Back in March, one man that was not diagnosed soon enough ended up dying.

A New Mexico man has died after contracting the bubonic plague, the state's health department said in a news release last Friday. It is the first human case of plague in New Mexico since 2021 and the first death since 2020, according to the New Mexico Department of Health. The man's name was not released to the media, but the department of health says the man resided in Lincoln County and that NMDOH staff is conducting outreach to area residents.

A month before that, there was a confirmed case in Oregon, and authorities are telling us that the victim was "likely infected by their pet cat" in that case.

Health officials announced this week that a resident of Deschutes County – a rural part of Oregon – was diagnosed with plague, marking the state's first human case in more

than eight years. The person was likely infected by their pet cat, who had developed symptoms, according to Deschutes County Health Services.

One of the reasons why this disease is so difficult to eliminate is because it spreads among animals, and cats and dogs that get infected can carry it home to their owners.

Usually, people get the plague after being bitten by a rodent flea carrying Yersinia pestis, the bacterium that causes the disease, or by handling an infected animal, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Cats, which become sick themselves, can directly infect humans, while hardier dogs may simply carry the fleas back to their owners. People also can become sick by inhaling droplets from the cough of an infected person or animal.

Hopefully the bubonic plague will not become a major problem any time soon. Because if it does, that would not be good at all.

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According to the WHO, bubonic plague has a very high death rate.

The WHO estimates that 30% to 60% of people die of bubonic plague. Pneumonic plague is fatal when left untreated.

There is no vaccine for plague in the U.S., the CDC said. People who develop symptoms of plague should immediately see a health provider.

Personally, I think that dengue fever (also known as bone-break fever) is much more of a threat. This is a disease that causes horrifying pain, and lots of people in this country

have already been infected this year.

For example, the CDC has announced that there have been 41 confirmed cases in New Jersey in 2024.

The CDC has issued an urgent dengue fever warning after 41 travelers in New Jersey were sickened with the mosquito-transmitted virus.

Cases of dengue are currently at an all-time high across North, Central, and South America, the CDC said.

The 41 New Jersey residents were infected while traveling as of July 2, the CDC said.

And in Florida, there have already been more than 200 confirmed cases so far this year.

Meanwhile, Florida has seen 210 total cases of dengue fever this year, seven of which are reported to be locally transmitted. Most of those cases were reported in Miami-Dade County.

Of course those that live closer to the equator are in much greater danger. We are seeing numbers in Central and South America that we have never seen before. In fact, so far in 2024 there have been almost 10 million cases in our half of the world.

In the first half of 2024, more than 9.7 million cases have been reported across North, Central, and South America, according to the CDC. US travelers accounted for more than 750 of those cases.

There is no magic pill that you can take to make dengue fever go away. If you get a really bad case, you are going to go through a tremendous amount of pain. So if you live in a high risk area, please be careful.

Before I end this article, I wanted to give an update on another disease that often causes excruciating pain. So far this year, a deadly new strain of Mpox that apparently spreads much more easily among humans has already caused more than 400 deaths in Africa.

According to Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention data, about 8,479 cases and 401 deaths from Mpox have been recorded since January 2024. Out of these, 97 percent of the cases were reported in DRC, now considered a hotspot.

Meanwhile, the other strain of Mpox that caused so much chaos in 2022 continues to circulate in countries all over the planet. It has never gone away. In fact, none of the major diseases that have erupted in recent years have gone away. They are all still with us.

We live at a time when our world is being ravaged by pestilences, but the truth is that what we have experienced so far is just the tip of the iceberg. I am entirely convinced that global pestilences will be one of the major themes of the next few years.

We are far more vulnerable than most people realize, and the next great pandemic could literally strike at any moment.

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