

Disease-carrying insects move north

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As the Earth warms, insects that carry disease are spreading into new areas, bringing the West Nile virus to Canada and malaria to high valleys.

Dr. Paul Epstein, who teaches at Harvard Medical School and once worked in Africa, said the shift is coming faster than physicians anticipated.

"Things we projected to occur in 2080 are happening in 2006," he told The Washington Post. "What we didn't get is how fast and how big it is, and the degree to which the biological systems would respond. Our mistake was in underestimation."

The World Health Organization says at least 30 diseases are either new or making comebacks because of climate change, a shift in the pattern of infectious disease unlike anything seen since the Industrial Revolution.

Epstein and his colleagues, in a report late last year, said cold areas are more sensitive to climate change than warm ones and insects are very sensitive to higher temperatures.

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