

Welcome

This publication provides updates for colleagues and partners across UKHSA and the Overseas Territories.

If you have any queries, feedback or contributions please contact: UKOTs.Programme@ukhsa.gov.uk

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Joint Communicable Disease Surveillance & Response Review in Bermuda

In March 2024, Graham Fraser (Consultant Epidemiologist), Amoolya Vusirikala (Senior Public Health Registrar) and John Lee (Laboratory Technical and Quality Manager) visited Bermuda to conduct a joint review of their communicable disease surveillance and response systems. The visit was at the invitation of Shaun Ramroop, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) at the Ministry of Health, to also assist the team to further develop UKHSA methodologies for assessing surveillance systems in small island state jurisdictions.

The team in partnership with colleagues at the CMO Office Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (ESU) took a systems approach to reviewing the present status of surveillance in Bermuda. This focused on the pathways by which communicable diseases are recognised, identified and reported, and how the received data is handled and used for public health intelligence and action. This approach was complemented by exploring systems and functions that support surveillance: legislation, workforce and professional development, laboratory networks and emergency preparedness.



Left: Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit, Office of the Chief Medical Officer, Bermuda

Right: John Lee at the Central Laboratory, Ministry of Health

In addition to the staff of the ESU, led by Epidemiologist Dy-Juan DeRosa, the team met and held discussions with diverse system participants and stakeholders, including clinicians and laboratory staff in public and private settings, environmental health officers, emergency preparedness management and staff of the Bermuda Health Council.

This joint review highlighted strengths of the Bermuda system, with a key role of clinical laboratories in surveillance, building on the availability of modern bench top rapid molecular diagnostics, together with close liaison between the ESU and reporting clinicians. Collaboration between UKHSA and the Ministry of Health in Bermuda is ongoing to further characterise present system strengths and possible areas for further development.

Network Spotlight: Prison Health Network

The Prison Health Network was established in 2020 and meets every quarter to discuss the world of prison health. The Network provides great opportunities to collaborate with those in the prison health sector, to share good practice in prison health across the UKOTs and internationally, support problem solving and share challenges together, and enable opportunities for professional development for people working on prison health in the UKOTs.

Recent network discussions have focused on developing mental health standards as well as medicine management and dispensing practices and challenges in UKOT prisons. We utilised our UKOTs Network connections by linking with the UKOTs Pharmacy Network, to aid in a multidisciplinary conversation on medicine management in prisons. It gave everyone great perspective on the current context and issues, and ways we can move forward together. In the coming year, we look forward to tackling themes of mental health and prison health data.

The Network is for people who work in prison health, whether under prison services or as a health professional. For further information on the UKOTs Prison Health Network or if you would like to join, please contact ukots.programme@ukhsa.gov.uk.

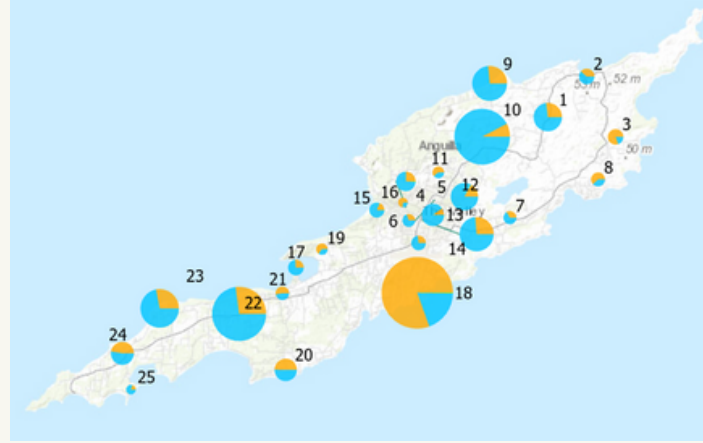
Anguilla 2024 MEZE Mission

The Medical Entomology and Zoonosis Ecology (MEZE) team travelled to Anguilla in February to conduct a snapshot survey of the island's mosquito fauna. Such surveys provide essential information on predominant mosquito species, vector-borne disease risk, and allow the team to develop relations with UKOT partner teams and advise on best practices. This visit is just one in a series of recent trips, where similar studies have been successfully completed in the British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, Montserrat, and Gibraltar.

The survey was highly successful, with almost 10,000 mosquitoes caught in a two-week trapping campaign spread across the island. Two species were found to predominate, *Culex quinquefasciatus* and *Aedes aegypti*. Whilst the former is largely just a biting nuisance on the island, the latter is a highly efficient vector of important arboviral diseases including Dengue fever, which has seen past outbreaks in Anguilla.

This work will also be used to identify hotspots on the island at elevated risk of mosquito-borne disease. Following this evaluation, the vector control team in Anguilla will mount an enhanced response in such areas including public information campaigns, insecticidal fogging, water-container treatment, and heightened mosquito trapping.

There have been an increasing number of autochthonous Dengue cases on the island, reported to the Anguilla Environmental Health team. In this context, MEZE's visit was very timely and we were able to provide technical advice and support to the vector control team.



Map of Anguilla with superimposed pie charts of predominant mosquito species relative abundance. Each number corresponds to an individual sample site. Blue = *Culex quinquefasciatus*; Orange = *Aedes aegypti*.



Members of the MEZE team and Anguilla Environmental Health Team.

March Media Spotlight

Ministry Of Health And Human Services In Collaboration With UK Health Security Agency Conducts A Migrant Health Needs Assessment

• Mon, Feb 26, 2024



Left to right: Allegra Chatterjee (Epidemiologist), Mrs. Desiree Lewis, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health and Human Services, Dr. Astwood, Chief Medical Officer, Hon. Shaun D Malcolm, Minister of Health and Human Services, Ms. Tamera Howell-Robinson, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health and Human Services, Annabel Grieve (Programme Management Lead) and Dr. Amoolya Vusirikala (Public Health Registrar)

Commenting on the visit, Hon. Shaun D Malcolm stated: "We welcome this support from UKHSA and FCDO with whom the Ministry of Health has enjoyed a close working relationship and technical support over the years, to formally assess the health needs of this population in order to ensure that the overall health of our population can be addressed in a holistic manner to ensure that universal access to health care is addressed."

Scientists confirm first cases of bird flu on mainland Antarctica

Fears for penguin colonies after the discovery of the highly contagious H5N1 virus in two dead skuas



A royal penguin defends a dead chick from a brown skua, Macquarie Island, Antarctica. Scientists think skua will probably transmit H5N1 to penguins. Photograph: blickwinkel/Alamy

"There are many reports now of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) affecting several species in the Antarctic regions this season," said Matthew Dryden from the UK Health Security Agency. "It may not have been reported on the Antarctic mainland until now because of the difficulties of accessing and sampling wildlife [there]."

The UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) Programme has been ongoing since 2016 and is funded by the Integrated Security Fund (ISF) through the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). UKHSA is the implementing partner.

