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World Zoonoses Day: India's One Health and the New Priority Disease List

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WHY IN NEWS

July 6 is observed as World Zoonoses Day, and in 2026 it coincides with the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) finalising a national ranking of priority zoonotic diseases, sharpening the focus of India's National One Health Mission (<https://ujyari.com/schemes/national-one-health-mission/>) on pandemic preparedness.

WHY JULY 6, AND WHAT ARE ZOOSES

World Zoonoses Day commemorates July 6, 1885, the day the French scientist Louis Pasteur administered the first successful rabies vaccine to a human, Joseph Meister. Rabies is itself a zoonosis, so the date has become the global marker for diseases that jump between animals and humans.

A zoonosis (plural: zoonoses) is any infectious disease that spreads naturally from vertebrate animals to humans, or from humans to animals. The scale is striking: about 60 per cent of all infectious diseases in humans and about 75 per cent of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic in origin. COVID-19, Nipah, avian influenza, Ebola and rabies are all zoonoses, which is why animal, human and environmental health can no longer be governed in silos.

THE NCDC PRIORITY ZOOTIC-DISEASE LIST

A National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) led exercise, under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, has ranked India's priority zoonotic diseases, and the ranking has drawn fresh attention around World Zoonoses Day. The exercise used a Delphi consultation, a structured, iterative process in which experts are

polled in rounds until a consensus ranking emerges. About 50 experts drawn from human health, animal husbandry, wildlife and the environment participated, scoring each disease against five criteria: severity of illness, economic burden, pandemic potential, preventability, and likelihood of spread.

RANK	PRIORITY ZONOSIS	NOTE
1	Zoonotic influenza	Avian/swine flu strains; high pandemic potential
2	Anthrax	Bacterial; livestock-linked, notifiable
3	Japanese encephalitis	Viral; pig-mosquito cycle, vaccine exists
4	Leptospirosis	Bacterial; rodent urine, flood-linked
5	Brucellosis	Bacterial; unpasteurised milk, occupational
6	Rabies	~100% vaccine-preventable, still major killer
7	Dengue	Vector-borne, large urban burden
8	Scrub typhus	Mite-borne rickettsial disease
9	Plague	Rodent-flea cycle, historic outbreaks
10	Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF)	Tick-borne, high case fatality

The top five, zoonotic influenza, anthrax, Japanese encephalitis, leptospirosis and brucellosis, are the immediate national focus. A priority list matters because it directs scarce surveillance, laboratory and vaccine resources to the diseases that carry the highest combined risk to public health and the economy.

THE NATIONAL ONE HEALTH MISSION (NOHM)

One Health is an integrated approach that recognises that the health of people, animals and the shared environment are interconnected, and must be managed together. India operationalises this through the National One Health Mission (NOHM).

FEATURE	DETAIL
Anchor body	Ujivari Current Affairs · ujivari.com · Free Daily Current Affairs for UPSC & State PCS Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), under the Principal Scientific Adviser
Coordinating centre	NCDC's Centre for One Health
Core idea	Integrate human, animal (livestock and wildlife) and environmental health
Key programmes integrated	National Rabies Control Programme; National Programme for Prevention and Control of Zoonoses; leptospirosis control programme; Snakebite Envenoming Action Plan
Goal alignment	Post-COVID pandemic preparedness and biosecurity (https://ujivari.com/vocab/biosecurity/)

By bringing the rabies, zoonoses, leptospirosis and snakebite programmes under a single One Health umbrella, NOHM aims to replace fragmented, disease-by-disease responses with coordinated surveillance, shared laboratories and joint outbreak response across ministries.

The Rabies Paradox

Rabies illustrates why prioritisation and One Health matter. It is essentially 100 per cent vaccine-preventable, yet it remains one of India's most persistent zoonoses because of large stray-dog populations, gaps in post-exposure prophylaxis and low animal-vaccination coverage. The National Rabies Control Programme targets the global goal of zero human dog-mediated rabies deaths by 2030.

ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

The NCDC priority list gives India a “science, systems and statecraft” framework for biosecurity: science ranks the threats, systems (One Health surveillance and labs) detect and respond, and statecraft (inter-ministerial coordination, funding, legislation) sustains preparedness. This is exactly the lesson COVID-19 taught, that early detection at the animal-human interface is the cheapest form of pandemic insurance.

Challenges remain. Animal-health surveillance is still weaker than human-health surveillance, inter-ministerial data-sharing is patchy, and many zoonoses are under-reported because they mimic common fevers. The way forward lies in strengthening integrated disease surveillance that links animal and human data in real time, expanding notifiable-disease status for priority zoonoses, investing in regional BSL-3 laboratories, and mainstreaming (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/mainstreaming/>) One Health into district health systems rather than treating it as a central-level project.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3: Science and technology (health, biotechnology); issues relating to disease and epidemics; disaster management (biological disasters and pandemic preparedness).

GS Paper 2: Issues relating to health; government policies and interventions; institutions and bodies (NCDC, ICMR).

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Prelims pointers:

- World Zoonoses Day is July 6, marking Pasteur’s first rabies vaccine (July 6, 1885).
- About 60% of infectious diseases and about 75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic.
- NCDC priority list top five: zoonotic influenza, anthrax, Japanese encephalitis, leptospirosis, brucellosis; ranking used a Delphi consultation of about 50 experts on five criteria.
- NOHM is anchored by ICMR; the NCDC Centre for One Health coordinates rabies, zoonoses, leptospirosis and snakebite programmes.
- Rabies is essentially 100% vaccine-preventable; target of zero dog-mediated human rabies deaths by 2030.

Mains question: “Nearly three-fourths of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic.” In this light, examine how India’s One Health approach and its priority zoonotic-disease ranking can strengthen pandemic preparedness. (15 marks, 250 words)

FACTS CORNER

FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

World Zoonoses Day: observed on July 6, commemorating Louis Pasteur’s first successful rabies vaccine on July 6, 1885.

Scale: about 60% of infectious diseases and about 75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic (spread between animals and humans).

NCDC priority list: produced through a Delphi consultation of about 50 experts using five criteria, severity, economic burden, pandemic potential, preventability and likelihood of spread. Top five: zoonotic influenza, anthrax, Japanese encephalitis, leptospirosis, brucellosis. Top ten adds rabies, dengue, scrub typhus, plague and Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF).

National One Health Mission (NOHM): anchored by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR); coordinated through the NCDC’s Centre for One Health; integrates the National Rabies Control Programme, the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Zoonoses, the leptospirosis programme and the Snakebite Envenoming Action Plan.

One Health: an integrated human-animal-environment approach to health, central to post-COVID pandemic preparedness.

Rabies: essentially 100% vaccine-preventable, yet remains a major Indian zoonosis; India targets zero dog-mediated human rabies deaths by 2030.

Sources: NCDC (<https://ncdc.mohfw.gov.in>), ICMR (<https://www.icmr.gov.in>), PIB (<https://pib.gov.in>)

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