

## News Release

### Horsefly bite death threat wings its way to Britain

A plague of vampire horseflies bringing with them the threat of serious infection has illustrated why Britain must lead the race to develop new antibiotics – claims a charity.

The hot weather has seen populations of bloodsucking clegs – or horseflies – reach Mediterranean levels. And with the female feeding off blood, Antibiotic Research UK (ANTRUK) has warned that bites could result in painful swellings and the possibility of infections which might not be treatable with our existing antibiotics.

“Here is a prime example of why we need to develop new medications fast to keep up with our changing climate and unexpected situations such as a horsefly bite epidemic” said Professor Colin Garner, Chief Executive of ANTRUK. “We have been warning for some time that our antibiotics are so ineffective that we could reach the situation where people will once again die from an infected scratch or bite. That tragic moment may just have come. I personally got bitten recently by a horsefly and it is very painful. I am self-medicating with creams and an oral antihistamine tablet to ensure the bite site does not become infected.”

As NHS experts remind, the majority of small but nonetheless painful insect bites and stings can be treated at home with over-the-counter medication (see <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/insect-bites-and-stings/symptoms/>) But itchy horsefly bites take longer to heal and can become infected, especially if scratched.

The effects of an infected horsefly bite can include:

- An often raised and nasty rash
- Dizziness

- Shortage of breath
- Weak and swollen limbs

Current treatments include antihistamine and steroid creams and in serious cases, broad-spectrum antibiotics. But with bacteria in our bodies becoming more resistant to these so-called wonder drugs, doctors have been left scrabbling around to find the right treatment to fight infections, and in some cases this has resulted in the threat of amputation or death.

“It is entirely possible in 2018 that you can die of an insect bite, not just in some hot foreign clime, but here in Britain” continued Colin Garner. “We have not invested in the kinds of antibiotics we need to keep up with devious and ever-changing bacterial infections. Now we are in real danger that we could return to a pre-antibiotic past, where dirty wounds, bites and conditions like TB and Typhoid might kill.”

ANTRUK has called for everyone from Government to drugs companies, research charities and even a public still intent on demanding on antibiotics from their doctor, to work together to avoid what some experts call, “antibiotic resistance, the biggest health problem facing human kind.”

The NHS advise that you see your GP immediately if an insect bite results in symptoms of an infection such as pus, increased pain, redness and swelling.

ANTRUK offer research grants to those seeking alternatives to our current antibiotics through its Small Research Grant Scheme

(<https://www.antibioticresearch.org.uk/antruk-launches-small-research-grants-scheme/> ). It also supports people and their families coping with the often heart-breaking effects of superbugs such as MRSA.

To donate to the charity, visit <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/2680#/DonationDetails>

- Ends -

### **For further information**

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