

Media Questions and Answers: Zika virus and nonhuman primates (NHPs)

Q: Can NHPs become infected with Zika virus?

A: Yes. In 1947, Zika virus was first discovered in a monkey in the Zika Forest in Uganda. In the 1950s, monkeys were experimentally infected with Zika virus by injection. A few of the monkeys developed a slight fever, but most did not develop any symptoms.

Q: Do NHPs infected with Zika virus become sick?

A: Not much is known about Zika virus infections in NHPs. The virus was first discovered in a monkey that had a slight fever. In the 1950's, most of the NHPs infected experimentally by injection of the Zika virus did not develop symptoms.

Q: What is the incubation period for Zika virus in NHPs?

A: Little is known about Zika virus infections in NHPs. In one study, NHPs had virus circulating in their blood 4 to 5 days after experimental infection.

Q: What is the risk of importing into the United States NHPs that are infected with Zika virus and subsequently infecting local mosquito populations with Zika virus?

A: Nonhuman primates can only be imported into the United States for science, education or exhibition and cannot, under any circumstances, be imported as pets. It is not known how common Zika virus is in NHP populations. However, NHPs imported into the United States undergo a mandatory 31-day quarantine after importation. This quarantine is done in an enclosed building or in a screened enclosure that keeps the animals away from mosquitoes. People working with the imported NHPs must wear personal protective equipment that includes coveralls, eye protection, and respiratory protection. Based on limited research, any animal that enters quarantine with a Zika virus infection or is exposed to Zika virus should have cleared the infection by the end of the quarantine period. Therefore, there should be no risk of infecting local mosquito populations from imported NHPs.

Q: What is the risk of Zika virus infections in NHPs housed in outdoor facilities in areas where Zika is spreading?

A: If Zika virus is spreading in people in areas where NHPs are housed outdoors, the animals could be infected with the virus. Facilities with outdoor housing should work with state and local authorities to develop a mosquito surveillance and management program at the facility to prevent the possible spread of Zika virus.

