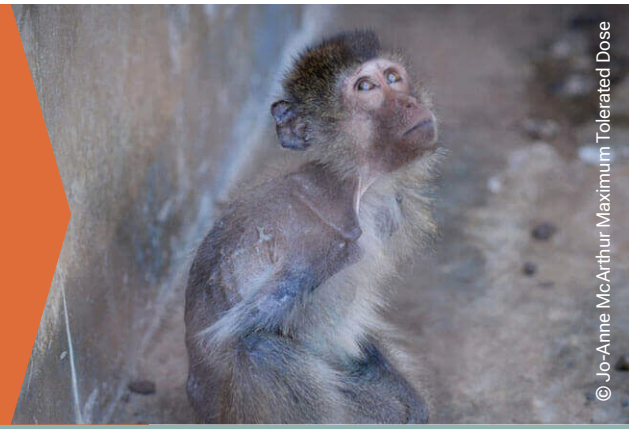


MALARIA

Infected monkeys brought into the U.S. from countries where malaria is common may serve as hosts, allowing mosquitoes to spread the disease locally.



Mosquito-Borne Pathogens at the Lab Door

Malaria is a mosquito-borne disease caused by Plasmodium parasites. Several simian (monkey) malaria species circulate among macaques in Southeast Asia,¹ the same region supplying thousands of monkeys each year to U.S. research facilities. Monkeys carrying these parasites often don't show any symptoms,² making infected macaques a silent but serious risk. The primate research industry has known for over a decade that malaria-infected monkeys are entering the U.S. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now requires importers to treat monkeys if a malaria infection is detected, but detection is inconsistent and far from foolproof. As a result, infected monkeys continue to enter the U.S., where they present a dual risk: animal welfare concerns inside laboratories and the possibility of fueling mosquito-borne transmission outside them.

Evidence: Infected Monkeys Are in the Supply Countries

A 2016 study, co-authored by a major primate importer (Primate Products Inc.), found that 177 of 276 long-tailed macaques sampled in Southeast Asia tested positive for Plasmodium DNA.³ The authors explicitly warned of zoonotic risks to local human populations and called for increased public health advocacy—warnings that went unheeded.

The two parasites of greatest concern are:

- *Plasmodium knowlesi*—a zoonotic malaria parasite capable of causing severe, sometimes fatal disease, with rapid replication that heightens the potential for an epidemic.⁴
- *Plasmodium cynomolgi*—another monkey malaria parasite, which can hide in the body and cause relapses months later. Frequently misdiagnosed as *P. vivax*, it has already infected people in Cambodia.⁵

Failing to Screen = Failing to Protect

The CDC has a treatment protocol for malaria-positive monkeys, but testing during quarantine is voluntary. Without mandatory screening, most monkeys remain unscreened and can still enter mosquito-friendly regions of the U.S. with hidden infections.

The U.S. Has the Right Conditions for Malaria Transmission

Transmission requires infected hosts and mosquitoes; the U.S. already has both. Mosquitoes capable of transmitting malaria are entrenched across the South, spreading northward with climate change and building up in urban “border zones.” In Miami-Dade County alone, surveys found tens of thousands of malaria-capable mosquitoes clustered near primate facilities.⁶

Beyond Malaria

Imported macaques also carry other mosquito-borne threats, including Zika and yellow fever.^{7,8} *Aedes aegypti*, the vector for both, is entrenched in the southern U.S., with Zika outbreaks already recorded in Florida and Texas.^{9,10} Recent studies show that *Aedes aegypti* from Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam) are highly susceptible to yellow fever virus, underscoring the danger of importing primates from these regions.¹⁰

Endnotes

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- ¹⁰ Gabiane G, Yen P, Failloux A. Aedes mosquitoes in the emerging threat of urban yellow fever transmission. *Rev Med Virol*. 2022;32(4):e2333. doi:10.1002/rmv.2333