Emerging Diseases from Animals

Is human disruption of natural systems putting our own health and well-being at risk?

Human activities disrupt ecological systems worldwide, increasing the likelihood that infectious disease will spread from animals to humans, as has already occurred with the Ebola virus and HIV/AIDS. Scientists estimate that more than 60 percent of the 400 new infectious diseases in humans that emerged in the past 70 years were of animal origin. And this threat is increasing as land-use changes bring animals and humans together, as livestock raising becomes intensified, and as the use of antibiotics in animals increases. The authors contend that, despite rising attention to high-profile pandemics like Ebola, neither governments nor publics appreciate that such outbreaks are emblematic of a systemic, global problem.

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