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Protecting humans and animals from diseases in wildlife

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Avian influenza (H5N1), rabies, plague, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), and more recently swine flu (H1N1) are all examples of diseases that have made the leap from animals to humans. As the list continues to grow, experts at The University of Nottingham are to lead a project aimed at developing a state-of-the-art pan-European surveillance system to monitor emerging and re-emerging infections in wildlife.

Sixty one per cent of known pathogens are zoonotic — diseases that have crossed over from animals to humans — but our knowledge and understanding of the prevalence of disease in wildlife and the ecology, transmission and evolution of disease in animals is still limited.

' Novel Technologies for Surveillance of Emerging and Re-emerging Infections of Wildlife (WildTech)' is a proactive attempt to predict and manage disease threats from wildlife and assess the risk to domestic animals and humans. With EU funding of €6m, 13 partners and a network of over 22 wildlife specialists in European and neighbouring countries, have joined forces to address what is seen as a very alarming trend. The partners include Twycross Zoo, East Midlands Zoological Society which is one of the Clinical Associates of the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science (SVMS) at The University of Nottingham.

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More information is available from Dr Richard Lea on

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