

New study names Marburg, Ebola hotspots in Uganda

Outbreaks. According to the survey, Uganda has reported eight outbreaks of Ebola and Marburg between 2000 and 2016.

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KAMPALA. As the country battles an outbreak of Marburg in the eastern district of Kween, a new study has named parts of the country that are at risk of registering Marburg and Ebola outbreaks.

Published in Plos, a California based research Journal on September 5, the study indicates that Uganda has reported eight outbreaks of Ebola and Marburg caused by filoviruses between 2000 and 2016, more than any other country in the world.

The study conducted by the Uganda Virus Research Institute, Makerere University and the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, predicated several geographical locations in the country that are likely to suffer outbreaks of the two viral haemorrhagic fevers.

It also indicates that Uganda is home to fruit bats, which act as reservoirs to the filoviruses, mainly responsible for causing the haemorrhagic fevers.

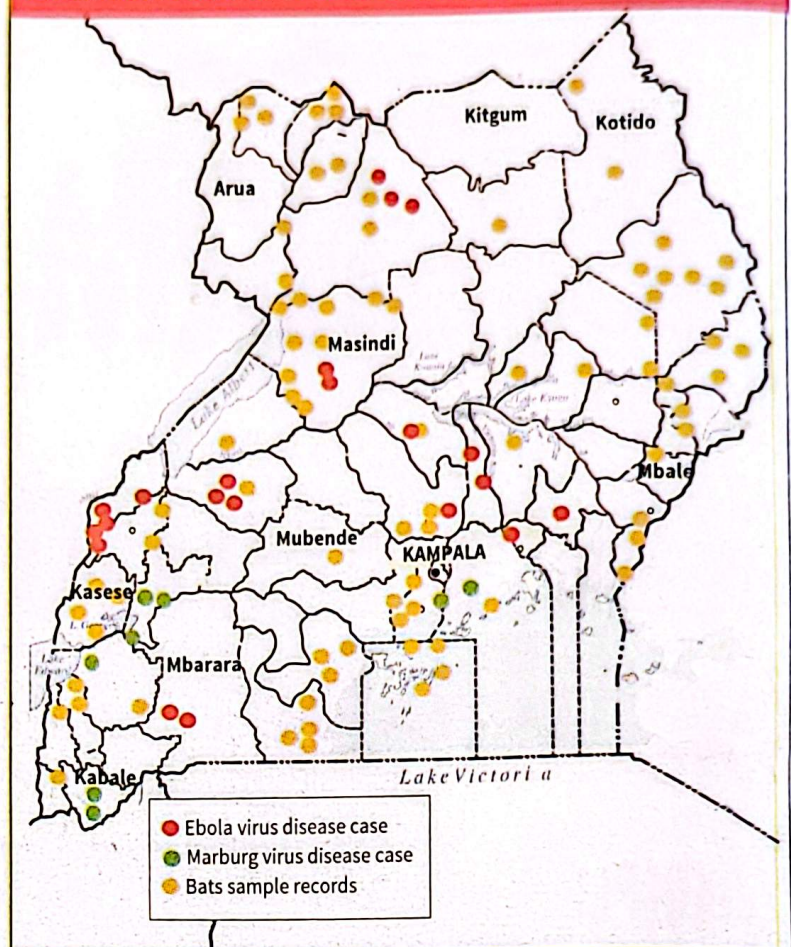
"Potential outbreak areas for Ebola and Marburg virus diseases were predicated in the West, Southwest and Central parts of Uganda which corresponds to the bat distribution and previous filo virus outbreaks," the study reads in part.

For instance, the study indicates that areas in the western rift valley districts of Bundibugyo, Masindi, Kibale and Hoima, Kasese, Kabarole, Kamwenge, Bushenyi and Ibanda are at high risk of having continuous Ebola outbreaks. It also predicts that

KEY ISSUES

Risk. A low risk for an Ebola outbreak was predicted in north-eastern Uganda and northern Uganda in the districts of Kitgum and Pader. Unlike predicted potential areas for Ebola, predicted areas for Marburg are mainly in the western sub-regions of Ankole, Tooro, Bunyoro, and Rwenzori region extending into DRC. Areas in the north and eastern have a low presence for Marburg outbreaks.

AREAS AT RISK OF EBOLA AND MARBURG OUTBREAKS



eastern Uganda and other areas that have not reported outbreaks before as potential outbreak hotspots. Dr Luke Nyakarahuka, the principal investigator, said the current outbreak in Kween has been directly linked to the fruit bats since the first probable case was living around a cave inhabited by the fruit bats.

Dr Nyakarahuka said populations residing near habitants of the fruit bats and other primates like monkeys and baboons should be vigilante and take caution as they interact with their surroundings. "We used species

distribution modelling to predict where filovirus outbreaks are likely to occur in Uganda to help in epidemic preparedness and surveillance," Dr Nyakarahuka said yesterday.

Dubbed; "Ecological Niche Modeling for Filoviruses: As risk map for Ebola and Marburg Virus disease Outbreaks," the study indicates that fruit bats are distributed all over Uganda with a high distribution around water bodies. In central, Luweero, Kayunga, Mpigi, Kampala, Mityana and Nakasongola districts were predicted as

potential areas for Ebola outbreaks whereas in the eastern part of the country, it is mainly the Busoga region along River Nile and Mbale district around Mt. Elgon that were predicated as potential Ebola hot spots.

Dr Miriam Nanyunja, a disease prevention and control officer at World Health Organisation, said last week that the country was at risk of several other Marburg outbreaks due a high presence of fruit bats and other primates.

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