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Russia Warns Against Marmot Hunting Amid Plague Scare

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The cases have been linked to the consumption of marmot meat. **Pixabay**

Russian health officials have stepped up border controls and are warning residents in Western Siberia not to hunt and eat marmots after neighboring Mongolia and China reported three cases of bubonic plague, the state-run TASS news agency reported Monday.

Mongolia last week quarantined its western region of Khovd near the border with Russia after identifying two suspected cases of bubonic plague linked to consumption of meat from the large rodents. On Sunday, authorities in the city of Bayan Nur in the Chinese region of Inner Mongolia issued a notice after a hospital reported a case of the plague — one of the deadliest diseases in history.

Russia's consumer protection watchdog Rospotrebnadzor said its officials and authorities in the Altai republic have begun patrolling a district near Khovd to warn shepherds about the dangers of hunting marmot, according to TASS.

"They are curbing illegal hunting on marmots and conducting an awareness campaign with

breeders about the strict rules," Rospotrebnadzor was quoted as saying.

Related article: Russian Experts Not Worried About Bubonic Plague Outbreak on Mongolian Border

The Russian-Mongolian border has been closed to all but essential goods since March because of the coronavirus pandemic since March.

Russian border agents conduct temperature checks among all truck drivers and turn away everyone who does not appear in a special database.

Russia's top infectious diseases experts say that the anti-plague measures, including vaccines and quarantine, taken by Mongolia and China will prevent the outbreak from spreading into Russia.

Rospotrebnadzor echoed their claims Monday.

Bubonic plague cycles naturally among wild rodents and is transmitted by fleas. Outbreaks of the disease, known as the Black Death in the Middle Ages, have become rare, and it can be treated with antibiotics.

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