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Simon Boyce / NGT&F

National Geographic Ultimate Explorer correspondent Nick Baker investigates these four zoonotic diseases - viruses that normally live in animals and have somehow jumped into humans - searching for clues that may help prevent the next deadly outbreak. In his quest, Baker traces Ebola back to its wild roots, combing the tropics of central Africa. In the Congo, Baker finds the skull of a gorilla that may have died of Ebola.

Ultimate Explorer: Virus Crisis

National Geographic Ultimate Explorer correspondent Nick Baker investigates recent outbreaks of four exotic diseases — Ebola, monkey pox, West Nile virus and SARS — questioning how much we have to fear these outbreaks. Premieres Sunday, Nov. 30, 8 p.m. ET

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RECENT OUTBREAKS of exotic diseases like Ebola, monkey pox, SARS and West Nile virus have provoked near panic in major cities throughout the world. These viruses, which previously lurked only in the remote wilderness, now raise fears of devastating worldwide epidemics. And to complicate matters, they're all zoonotic diseases, viruses that normally live in animals and have somehow jumped into humans.

But in today's global marketplace, modern shipping and transportation could allow the spread of some viruses across the planet with terrifying speed, as infected — and illicit — bushmeat begins to make its way out of Africa and into the markets of New York, Washington, D.C., London and other international destinations. Now, researchers are scrambling for answers within the animal world, searching for clues that may help prevent the next deadly outbreak.

Ebola is a classic example of an emerging disease that people fear - it kills both wildlife and humans with horrible efficiency. In rural Africa, hunting has brought Ebola out of the jungle and into the marketplace, primarily affecting remote villagers who most likely contracted the disease from infected "bushmeat," which is any meat that originated in the wild.

National Geographic Ultimate Explorer correspondent Nick Baker traces Ebola back to its wild roots. Combing the tropics of western Africa in search of insights and answers, Baker ventures into the epicenter of an Ebola infestation where hazmat suits are the required attire. Baker also searches for links that may explain the rapid emergence of SARS from a market in China and meets with survivors of West Nile virus and monkey pox in the United States. Along the way, Baker discovers a disturbing reality: the ease and convenience of today's international trade and travel may carry a deadly price — deadly viruses from afar.

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