



**Ministry of Health and Sanitation-GoSL
Directorate of Health Security and Emergencies**

PRESS RELEASE

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Discovery of Marburg Virus in Fruit-eating Bats in Sierra Leone

Marburg virus has been found in five cave-dwelling fruit-eating bats in three districts in Sierra Leone (Moyamba, Koinadugu, and Kono). The infected bats were sampled near caves in Moyamba (Fakunya Chiefdom), Koinadugu (Wara Wara Bafodia Chiefdom), and Kono (Lei Chiefdom).

This discovery was made and reported simultaneously to the Government of Sierra Leone by Njala University with funding from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the PREDICT project led by the University of Makeni and University of California, Davis with funding from USAID.

Marburg virus is in the same filovirus family as Ebola virus. Marburg virus can be spread from infected bats to people and from person to person causing Marburg Virus Disease (MVD) and can even cause death. The discovery is the first finding of Marburg virus in West Africa.

The type of bat that carries Marburg virus lives in many countries in Africa, including Sierra Leone. Therefore, finding Marburg virus in Sierra Leone is not surprising. It is likely that Marburg virus may also be found in other countries in West Africa where this bat lives. The type of bat found to have Marburg virus in Sierra Leone is the same type of bat linked to outbreaks of MVD in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya and South Africa.

In Sierra Leone, Marburg virus was found only in bats. There are no known cases of MVD in people in Sierra Leone at this time. The finding of Marburg virus in Sierra Leone *before* it has made people sick shows the hard work Sierra Leone is doing to learn about sicknesses in animals before they spread to people, and how best to live with animals safely.

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