



## Overview

[Wildlife, or “zoonotic” diseases](#) are caused by the transfer of pathogens between humans and animals. Over 75% of emerging diseases (such as COVID-19) originate in wildlife; their spread is exacerbated by deforestation, wildlife exploitation, development, and poor waste management, all of which increase wild animal-human proximity and the chance of wildlife disease spillover. The costs of wildlife diseases to public health are enormous, and [tend to fall disproportionately](#) on BIPOC communities, stemming from poor health care access and structural discrimination.

At the state level, policy options include restrictions on animal trafficking and trade, surveillance/reporting, and sharing of information and response. If states do not take action, wildlife diseases will continue to spread, and future pandemics could be even harder to control.

---

---

## State Options

- Fund inspection and enforcement of [illegal wildlife trafficking](#)
- Wildlife trafficking bans and restrictions on exotic species and species that are known disease carriers
- Protect and maintain biodiversity and ecosystem health - more diverse and healthy wildlife populations can help buffer humans against infection
- Restrict high risk wildlife markets with assistance for alternative protein sources for food insecure communities and those that rely on wildlife markets - introduced at the [federal level](#) in 2020

## KEY POINTS

- Approximately [one-quarter of human deaths](#) are caused by infectious diseases and nearly 60% of infectious diseases originate in wildlife.
- [Examples of wildlife diseases include:](#) COVID-19, HIV, Malaria, Ebola, SARS, bird flu, swine flu, West Nile and Lyme disease, and almost all started with wildlife exploitation through trade or hunting.
- Nationally, Black, Hispanic and Native Americans suffer from [disproportionate COVID-19 case and death rates](#) while often living in low income areas that [enable production of disease carrying mosquitoes](#).
- Wet markets bring together wildlife, domestic animals and humans that might never be in close contact otherwise - [this allows disease to spill over](#) to humans and between species.

## Other Resources

- [US National Library of Medicine - NIH report](#) on additional measures to limit wildlife diseases beyond the banning of wildlife markets.
- American College of Environmental Lawyers' [measures](#) that states can adopt to help prevent or mitigate the next pandemic
- Biodiversity plays a key role in reducing incidences of [Lyme disease](#) and [West Nile virus](#)
- Scientific American: Wildlife diseases compound crises in minority communities such as the [Navajo People](#)

