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Globalization benefits parasites

May 31, 2009 by [theviennacafe](#)

Increased international links could lead to more virulent and dangerous parasites, a study published Wednesday suggests.

The outcome is a function of natural selection, said Geoffrey Wild, a mathematician who specializes in biology at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ont. He, along with two evolutionary biologists at universities in the United Kingdom, published their paper in Nature.

The authors studied the relationship between how aggressive parasites are and how closely they are connected to their hosts.

“Our results show that an increase in parasite dispersal rate leads to selection for increased growth and, hence, to higher virulence,” they concluded. Virulence refers to the damage the parasite does to the host.

“The findings also suggest that as human activity makes the world more connected, natural selection will favour more virulent and dangerous parasites.”

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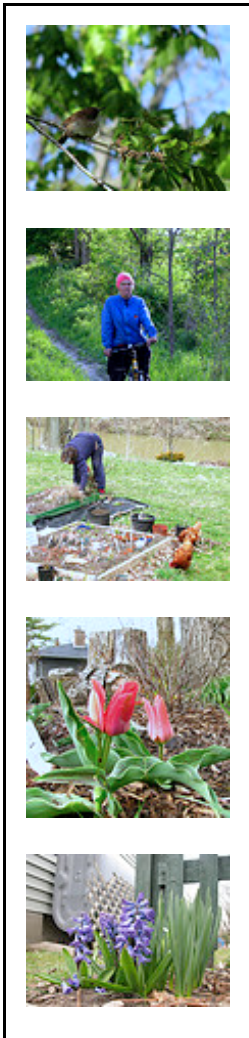
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