

20,000 ARE INFECTED ... AND IT'S GETTING WORSE

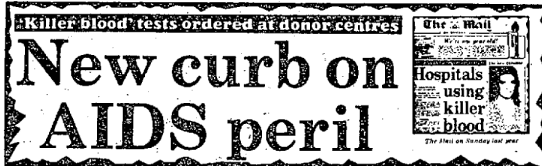
Britain threatened by gay virus plague

By BARBARA JONES, Medical Correspondent

THE killer AIDS virus is now spreading at the rate of about 100 cases a day in London alone.

Doctors estimate that as many as 20,000 people are already infected and will be carriers for life, although only a small percentage will develop the disease themselves.

Because of Government fears of an epidemic of plague proportions, people who are identified as carriers may in future be listed by the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre in London. The register would include details of their sexual habits as well as their medical histories. Homosexuals and bi-sexual men are the groups most at risk. Tests at major hospitals show that one in every five male patients attending clinics for sexually transmitted disease has been exposed to AIDS and



From The Mail on Sunday last September

has developed antibodies in his blood. This test for antibodies, developed at Middlesex Hospital's virology department, is the only method of screening for AIDS at present.

Blood

There is no known test for the disease itself, only for antibodies produced in the blood of those who have been exposed to AIDS.

So far the disease has claimed 120 victims in this country but doctors believe it could rocket to 500 this

year. AIDS — Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome — destroys the body's natural defences and leaves patients vulnerable to infection. It has proved fatal in every diagnosed case.

There are nearly 7,000 recorded cases in America, from where the disease is believed to have spread. Although homosexuals, bi-sexual men and drug abusers are the worst hit, AIDS can spread to others through contaminated blood donated at transfusion centres, or through the blood products used by Britain's 5,000 haemophiliacs.

Virologist Dr Richard Tedder, who developed the antibodies test at the Middlesex Hospital, said: 'We need health education and counselling services for the gay community, not only to help them cope with the risk they run from AIDS, but also to discourage them from giving blood.'

'My figures show that 20 per cent of males in the high risk group, presenting themselves at London's major clinics, are infected with the virus. That means about 100 cases a day.'

people and animals are living beings and should not have to suffer fear, harassment, injustice, ridicule and deprivation of basic rights.'

She condemned violence towards animals through 'milk drinking, zoo trips, school meals using animal products, stories and rhymes ridiculing or degrading animals and petkeeping'.

Three Blind Mice 'unfair to animals'

THE NURSERY rhyme Three Blind Mice should be banned from schools because it ridicules and degrades animals, according to a new teachers' pressure group.

And Teachers for Animal Rights is telling pupils to boycott school dinners containing meat.

Last night the campaign's organiser, primary school teacher Ms Wanda Dejidko, said: 'Women, black

AIDS screening tests ready for use soon

By Thomson Prentice, Science Correspondent

Screening tests which will help to prevent the disease AIDS being transmitted through blood transfusions are likely to be generally available in Britain and the United States within the next few months.

US health officials said yesterday that a new and "highly efficient" test to detect the virus linked with the disease had been developed by American scientists and would be in use "within a very short time".

The test is similar to the process developed in Britain, which is now being evaluated in blood centres and clinics. The British version, developed by the Middlesex Hospital, London, is expected to be in general use very soon, according to medical researchers.

Dr David Tyrrell, a leading virologist, chairman of the Medical Research Council working party on AIDS research in Britain, said yesterday: "This does show that very rapid

progress is being made and I think it is reassuring to the public at large".

It was only last year that French and American scientists working separately identified the same virus, known as HTLV-III, as the likely carrier of the disease. So far AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) has claimed 46 British lives among 108 known sufferers. It is known to be transmittable in blood transfusions.

The new American test, like its British counterpart, does not identify the disease itself. But it is successful in showing which blood is not infected. It is what is known as a "false positive" test, which may show that a person has the virus, when in fact he does not.

When the test shows a positive result, further checks will be carried out to confirm its accuracy.