

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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★ **Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic.**

Quammen, David (Author)

Oct 2012. 480 p. Norton, hardcover, \$28.95. (9780393066807). 614.4.

Exemplary science writer Quammen schools us in the fascinating if alarming facts about zoonotic diseases, animal infections that sicken humans, such as rabies, Ebola, influenza, and West Nile. Zoonoses can escalate rapidly into global pandemics when “human-to-human transmission” occurs, and Quammen wants us to understand disease dynamics and exactly what’s at stake. Drawing on the truly dramatic history of virology, he profiles brave and stubborn viral sleuths and recounts his own hair-raising field adventures, including helping capture large fruit bats in Bangladesh. Along the way, Quammen explains how devilishly difficult it is to trace the origins of a zoonosis and explicates the hidden process by which pathogens “spillover” from their respective reservoir hosts (water fowl, mosquitoes, pigs, bats, monkeys) and infect humans. We contract Lyme disease after it’s spread by black-legged ticks and white-footed mice, not white-tailed deer as commonly believed. The SARS epidemic involves China’s “wild flavor” trend and the eating of civets. Quammen’s revelatory, far-reaching investigation into AIDS begins in 1908 with a bloody encounter between a hunter and a chimpanzee in Cameroon. Zoonotic diseases are now on the rise due to our increasing population, deforestation, fragmented ecosystems, and factory farming. Quammen spent six years on this vital, in-depth tour de force in the hope that knowledge will engender preparedness. An essential work.

— *Donna Seaman*