Group on
Impact of Infectious Diseases
on Host Populations

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Group Report

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INTRODUCTION
Infectious diseases have long been recognized as a major cause of mortality in human and other populations. Their impact upon host population dynamics, however, remains poorly understood and poses a challenge for ecologists and epidemiologists alike. This report sets forth to examine our current state of knowledge on the impact of infectious diseases upon host populations. In so doing, the gaps in our knowledge become apparent, important questions can be posed, and appropriate observations identified.

We shall consider human and nonhuman populations separately, not out of respect for Bishop Wilberforce, but because the questions posed, the data available, and the directions of future research are in many cases quite different. For instance, the historical impact of disease is of more consuming interest in human than in nonhuman populations, while the extent to which disease maintains populations below their disease-free levels is more an issue to animal