

MALARIA BUGS' BLOODY BATTLE FOR SUPREMACY**IT is little wonder Cheryl Cole faced such a trauma when she caught malaria.**

Scientists have discovered why the tropical disease is so difficult to treat and cure – because its parasites use sophisticated tactics to battle rival strains.

The Edinburgh University team found when parasites enter the bloodstream, they produce cells that replicate quickly to cause

infection. Malaria infections usually consist of competing types of the parasite, so this strategy is the best way to beat the competition, scientists say.

It means the disease does not spread as virulently as it might, because the energies of the parasites are focused on bringing down their current victim rather than trying to spread to other hosts through mosquitoes. Girls

Aloud singer and X Factor judge Cheryl was struck down with malaria after a trip to Tanzania last July.

Laura Pollitt, of Edinburgh's School of Biological Sciences, said: "Our results explain a long-standing puzzle.

"We found that when parasites compete with each other, they respond with a sophisticated strategy to safeguard their

long-term survival. They opt to fight it out in the bloodstream rather than risk everything on the chance of infecting mosquitoes."

The research, published in the *American Naturalist*, was funded by the Wellcome Trust, the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and the Natural Environment Research Council.

**STRUCK DOWN:** Cheryl Cole