



# ASEAN BIOLOGICAL THREATS SURVEILLANCE CENTRE

## DISEASE ALERT



May 14, 2025 | Issue No. 32

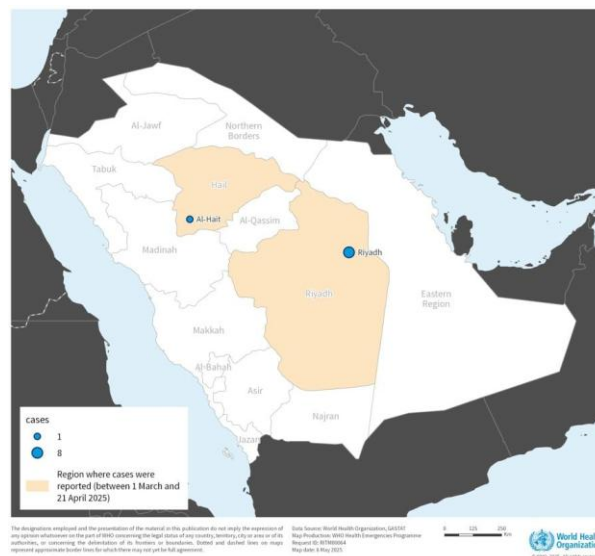
## First alert: May 14, 2025 | **Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in Saudi Arabia**

### Sub-Locations Affected

Ha'il Region, Riyadh Region

### Event Description

On May 13, 2025, the World Health Organization (WHO) published Disease Outbreak News (DON) regarding nine additional laboratory-confirmed cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection, including two fatalities, which occurred from March 1 to April 21, 2025. This information was reported by the Ministry of Health (MoH) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).



Map of location affected

(source: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2025-DON569>)

### Epidemiological Information

- Between March 1 and April 21, 2025, the Ministry of Health (MoH) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) reported nine cases of MERS-CoV infection. The cases were reported from the Hail (1) and Riyadh (8) regions of Saudi Arabia. Of the reported cases, five were male and four were female. Laboratory confirmation of the cases was performed using real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR)

**Case 1:** On March 1, 2025, the first case was confirmed, involving a Ha'il resident who had been hospitalized since February 23. The patient was over 65 years old and had previously had indirect contact with camels. **Despite receiving treatment at the hospital, the patient died.**

**Case 2:** On April 3, 2025, another case was confirmed in a Riyadh resident with no known history of contact with camels or camel products. The patient was hospitalized since March 31, 2025. **Despite receiving treatment at the hospital, the patient died.**

**Case 3:** On April 6, 2025, another case was confirmed in a Riyadh resident who had no known history of contact with camels or camel products. The patient was hospitalized on April 6 after experiencing symptoms since April 3 and recovered after receiving treatment.

**Case 4-9,** confirmed between April 7 and 16, 2025. Those affected were health and care workers in Riyadh who **acquired the infection while caring for Case 2.** They have since recovered. The cluster was identified through contact tracing and subsequent testing of all contacts. Four of the six health care workers were asymptomatic, and two showed only mild, nonspecific signs, including myalgia, fatigue, nausea, and vomiting.

- Since the first report of MERS-CoV in KSA in 2012, a total of 2,627 laboratory-confirmed cases of MERS-CoV infection, with 946 associated deaths (a case fatality rate (CFR) of 36%). Twenty-seven countries across all six WHO regions have reported new cases, with most cases (2,218, or 84%) coming from Saudi Arabia, including the newly reported cases. Since 2019, no human MERS-CoV infections have been reported outside the Middle East.

## Response Measures

- The Ministry of Health of KSA implemented the following response measures:

*Infection prevention and control (IPC) measures in healthcare settings*, including a) regular training of health and care workers on IPC measures, b) implementation of stringent IPC measures, including triage protocols, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and isolation procedures for suspected cases, and c) prompt isolation of cases and quarantine of contacts.

*Surveillance and testing*, including rigorous contact tracing and testing of high-risk contacts, including healthcare workers and inclusion of MERS-CoV in sentinel surveillance testing algorithms since 2023.

*Public health awareness and hygiene practices*, including public health awareness campaigns to prevent human-to-human transmission and advising people with underlying chronic medical conditions to avoid close contact with animals, particularly dromedaries.

- WHO Recommends healthcare facilities to implement stringent infection prevention and control (IPC) measures, including proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), patient isolation, and adequate ventilation.

- WHO Member States are urged to maintain robust surveillance for acute respiratory infections and to investigate any unusual patterns.
- World Health Organization advises individuals with chronic medical conditions to avoid close contact with animals, particularly dromedaries. General hygiene measures, such as regular handwashing and avoiding consumption of raw camel products, are advised.
- WHO does not currently recommend any travel or trade restrictions related to this event

#### **Sources:**

1. Al Arabiya (2025, May 13). *Two MERS deaths reported in Saudi Arabia: WHO*. Retrieved May 14, 2025, from <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/saudi-arabia/2025/05/13/two-mers-deaths-reported-in-saudi-arabia-who>
2. BlueDot (Event Alert), issued on May 14, 2025.
3. WHO (2025, May 12). *Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus - Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. Retrieved May 14, 2025, from <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2025-DON569>
4. Vax Before Travel (2025, May 13). *Fatal MERS Outbreak Confirmed in Arabia*. Retrieved May 14, 2025, from <https://www.vax-before-travel.com/fatal-mers-outbreak-confirmed-arabia-2025-05-13>

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