



# ASEAN BIOLOGICAL THREATS SURVEILLANCE CENTRE

## DISEASE ALERT



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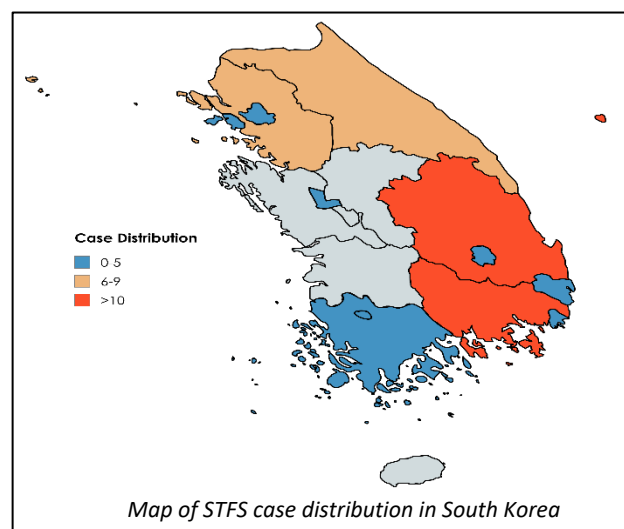
**First alert: July 3, 2025 | STFS Virus in South Korea**

### Sub-Locations Affected

Chungcheongbuk-do (Cheongju-si)

### Event Description

A group of healthcare workers in Cheongju, South Korea contracted Severe Fever with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (SFTS) following contact with an infected hospitalized patient. Health authorities are actively monitoring the situation. SFTS transmission occurs via tick bites or direct contact with contaminated blood and bodily fluids. Prevention measures include reducing tick exposure during outdoor activities and using proper protective equipment when necessary.



Source: Dportal Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA)

### Epidemiological Information

- As of 2 July 2025, there are 75 laboratory-confirmed cases with top three reporting provinces: Gyeongsangnam, Gyeongsangbuk, and Gyeonggi with 11 cases, 10 cases, and 8 cases respectively.
- A total of nine healthcare workers were exposed to infected blood and bodily fluids while providing care to the index patient in the intensive care unit. While all nine healthcare workers developed symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle pain, and diarrhea between 17 to 20-Jun-2025, seven individuals tested positive for SFTS. All have since recovered.
- The index patient was a 69-year-old person who developed symptoms on June 2, 2025, was admitted to the hospital soon thereafter, and passed away on June 11, 2025, following intensive medical treatment that included cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
- So far, there has been no evidence of onwards transmission beyond the healthcare cluster.

## Disease Information

- Pathogen: SFTS virus, belonging to the *Phlebovirus* genus of the *Phenuiviridae* family.
- Vector and Transmission: SFTS is primarily transmitted through bites from infected ticks, notably *Haemaphysalis longicornis*. However, human-to-human transmission has been documented through contact with blood or body fluids, particularly in clinical and funeral care settings.
- Symptoms: High fever, thrombocytopenia, leukopenia, gastrointestinal symptoms (diarrhea, vomiting), and multiorgan dysfunction in severe cases.
- Mortality Rate: Rates vary by country, influenced by factors such as case demographics. Literature indicates a case fatality rate of 18.7% in South Korea based on data from 2013 to 2022.
- Treatment and Prevention: There is no specific antiviral treatment or vaccine for SFTS. Prevention relies on tick bite avoidance and strict use of personal protective equipment (PPE) during patient care.

## Response Measures

- Healthcare personnel and funeral home staff who had direct contact with the initial patient are under surveillance, along with close contacts who had indirect exposure, for a 28-day period covering two incubation cycles.
- The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency stresses the need for preventive actions among high-risk groups, including full personal protective equipment during patient care and avoiding outdoor areas where ticks are commonly found.
- For outdoor recreation, especially in countryside and agricultural regions, individuals should wear protective garments and apply insect repellent.

### Sources:

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3. Choi, J., Hwang, J., Lee, H., & Hwang, K. (2023). Epidemiological characteristics of cases and deaths of severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome (SFTS), 2022. *Public Health Weekly Report*, 16(30), 1025-1037. <https://doi.org/10.56786/PHWR.2023.16.30.2>
4. Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency. (2025, July 3). STFS in total. *KDCA Disease Portal*. <https://dportal.kdca.go.kr/pot/is/summaryEDW.do>

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