



ASEAN BIOLOGICAL THREATS SURVEILLANCE CENTRE

DISEASE ALERT



Korea Disease Control and
Prevention Agency



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ASSOCIATION
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ASIAN NATIONS

With Support by:

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First alert : May 6, 2026

**Second alert : May 8, 2026 | Hantavirus cluster linked to cruise ship travel,
Multi-country**

Event Description

Since May 2, 2026, the WHO has monitored a hantavirus cluster involving 147 individuals aboard a cruise ship currently moored off Cape Verde. As of May 7, eight cases have been reported, including three fatalities. Laboratory results confirm that five cases are caused by the Andes virus, a specific hantavirus strain capable of limited person-to-person transmission through close, prolonged contact. International health teams are currently on-site conducting medical evaluations and managing disembarkation protocols. The vessel departed Ushuaia on April 1, 2026, and made multiple stops across South Atlantic islands before reaching Cape Verde.

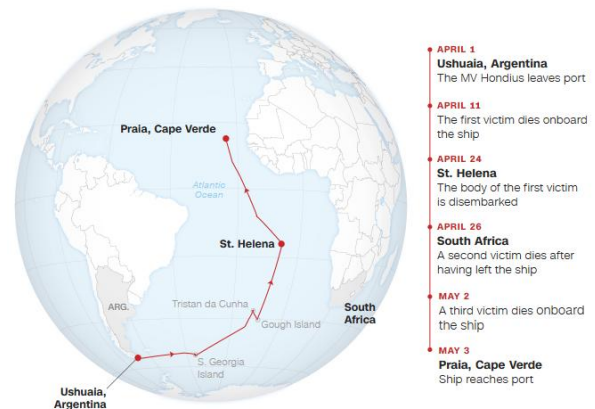


Figure 1. Route of the cruise ship across the South Atlantic in relation to the hantavirus cluster

Epidemiological Information

- **On April 1, 2026**, a ship carrying 147 individuals (88 passengers and 59 crew) from 23 nationalities departed Ushuaia and made multiple stops across South Atlantic islands before mooring off Cape Verde.
- **Between April 6 and 28, 2026**, illness onset occurred among multiple individuals, characterized by fever and gastrointestinal symptoms with rapid progression to pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, and shock.
- The outbreak originated with an adult male who died on board on April 11, followed by his close contact who succumbed on April 26 after disembarking in South Africa. Two additional cases emerged in late April, including one fatality and one patient currently in intensive care. Laboratory testing has confirmed hantavirus infection in several instances, with investigations linking the initial cases to travel in South America prior to boarding.

Exposure is believed to be associated with a bird-watching trip in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay in areas where rodent reservoirs of Andes virus are present.

- **As of May 4, 2026**, seven cases, including two laboratory-confirmed Hantavirus infections, have been reported on board, resulting in three deaths.
- **On May 6, 2026**, Health authorities in Switzerland confirmed one imported hantavirus infection in a male patient in Zurich, linked to the recent affected ship. The patient developed symptoms after returning in late April 2026 and was promptly isolated and hospitalized. Testing confirmed infection with the Andes virus strain. The patient's wife, who travelled with him, remains asymptomatic but in precautionary self-isolation, while contact tracing is ongoing.
- **On May 7, 2026**, the WHO Director-General briefed media that eight cases had been reported, including three deaths; five had been confirmed. Three suspected cases, involving patients with fever and gastrointestinal symptoms, were under evaluation in Cape Verde.
- **On May 7, 2026**, Singapore's Communicable Disease Agency (CDA) reported that two residents, a 67-year-old Singaporean man and a 65-year-old Permanent Resident, had traveled on the same April 25 flight from Saint Helena to Johannesburg as a confirmed hantavirus case who later died in South Africa. Both arrived in Singapore in early May. Although the confirmed case did not enter Singapore, authorities have initiated monitoring protocols for the two residents due to potential exposure.
- Laboratory results identified the pathogen as the Andes virus, a strain that is notable for its ability to spread through limited person-to-person transmission via close and prolonged contact. Despite its severity, the WHO currently assesses the overall public health risk as low. However, the public is cautioned that additional cases could still emerge. This is due to the virus's incubation period. International health teams are continuing their surveillance and response efforts.

Response Measures

- Affected passengers are under isolation or have been medically evacuated, with a coordinated international response including contact tracing for flight passengers linked to Case 2, laboratory sequencing in South Africa, and active symptom monitoring for all crew and passengers for a 45-day period.
- Spain has agreed to receive the ship in the Canary Islands, following requests from WHO and the European Union. WHO is supporting Spain in managing the situation and ensuring appropriate health measures are in place. Epidemiological screening, disinfection, and risk assessment are being prepared prior to disembarkation.
- Contact tracing is ongoing for 82 passengers and six crew members from the April 25 flight between Saint Helena and Johannesburg, during which Case 2 was transported.

- Control measures currently focus on containment and international coordination: a WHO expert has been deployed to the vessel for medical assessments, and 2,500 diagnostic kits have been distributed across five countries to expedite testing. Additional international experts, including clinicians from the Netherlands and specialists from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), are assisting onboard operations until arrival in the Canary Islands.
- Medical teams from Cape Verde are providing onboard support. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is available for healthcare workers and ship personnel due to the potential risk of human-to-human transmission. Authorities are also assessing contact tracing at earlier disembarkation points before the ship reached Cape Verde.
- The WHO is finalizing operational protocols for the safe disembarkation and onward travel of the remaining passengers and crew while continuing to monitor new cases emerging within the virus's incubation period. The response is being coordinated under the framework of the International Health Regulations (IHR), with emphasis on maintaining passenger safety, dignity, and psychological well-being during the ongoing outbreak management.

Recommendations

- WHO assesses overall risk as low and does not recommend travel or trade restrictions. It advises coordinate response, early detection and care, refer severe cases for supportive care (e.g., ICU), prevention onboard and in communities, 45-day monitoring, self-isolation when ill, and increase vigilance among travelers, crew, and staff in endemic or eco-tourism settings.
- Singapore's CDA issued a public health advisory for travelers to areas with known hantavirus transmission. It recommends avoiding contact with rodents and their droppings, keeping food and living areas pest-free. CDA also advises strict personal hygiene and avoiding close contact with, or sharing items with, anyone with symptoms. Travelers who become unwell during or after travel should seek medical care promptly and provide a detailed itinerary, including any possible exposure to rodents or sick people.

Sources:

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