



ASEAN BIOLOGICAL THREATS SURVEILLANCE CENTRE

DISEASE ALERT

With Support by:



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ASSOCIATION
OF SOUTHEAST
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First alert : May 6, 2026

Third alert : May 10, 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 9, the total case count remained unchanged at eight cases, including three fatalities. Six cases have been laboratory-confirmed as hantavirus infections, all identified as Andes virus (ANDV). National IHR Focal Points (NFPs) have been notified through the International Health Regulations (2005) mechanism and are supporting international contact tracing efforts.

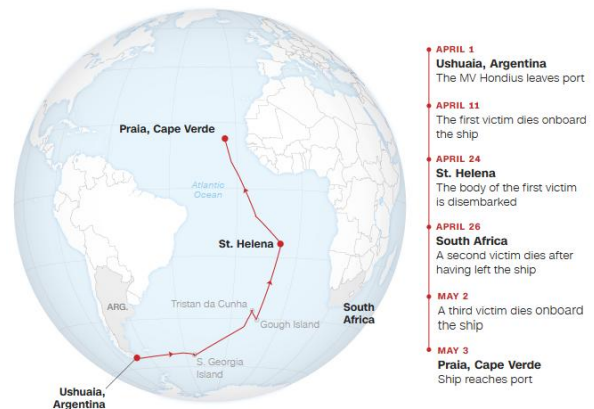


Figure 1. Route of the cruise ship across the South Atlantic in relation to the hantavirus cluster

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, including two passengers and one female close contact of the index probable case.
- **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. The patient's wife 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; six had been confirmed. Cases involved six passengers, a ship doctor, and a ship guide. Three suspected cases, involving patients with fever and gastrointestinal symptoms, were under evaluation. 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.
- **On May 8, 2026**, two Singapore residents aboard the MV Hondius tested negative for hantavirus, including Andes virus, based on multiple samples analyzed by the National Public Health Laboratory. As a precaution, both individuals will remain in quarantine for 30 days from their last exposure, followed by retesting and phone surveillance for the remainder of the 45-day maximum incubation period.

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.
- 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.
- WHO is finalizing operational protocols for the safe disembarkation and onward travel of remaining passengers and crew while monitoring for additional cases during the incubation period. The response is being coordinated under the International Health Regulations (IHR), with attention to passenger safety, dignity, and psychological well-being. International health teams continue surveillance and response efforts.

Recommendations

- The WHO currently assesses the public health risk related to the cruise ship as moderate, and at the Global level as low.
- The WHO advises affected countries to continue coordinating public health measures for passengers, crew, and contacts linked to the outbreak. Recommended actions include contact tracing, monitoring, laboratory testing, case management, infection prevention and control (IPC), and clear public communication.
- Passengers and crew from the affected ship and flights are advised to practice hand hygiene and monitor symptoms for 42 days after their last potential exposure. Individuals who develop symptoms should self-isolate and immediately notify health authorities. High-risk contacts, such as cabin mates, intimate partners, healthcare workers with unprotected exposure, and those handling contaminated materials, should undergo active monitoring and quarantine for 42 days. Low-risk contacts are advised to self-monitor for symptoms.
- WHO emphasizes early detection, prompt isolation, and strict IPC measures in healthcare settings. Severe cases may require intensive care, mechanical ventilation, extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO), or dialysis.
- WHO also recommends strengthening public awareness, rodent control, and risk communication efforts, particularly for occupational and ecotourism-related exposures. Based on current information, WHO does not recommend any travel or trade restrictions related to the outbreak.
- Singapore's Communicable Diseases Agency (CDA) stated that the risk to the public remains low but continues to closely monitor the situation and is prepared to strengthen public health measures if necessary.

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