

Does the current Hantavirus outbreak pose a risk to aviation?

9 May 2026

Reports of a hantavirus outbreak on a cruise ship has raised fears of another global public health outbreak. As of 8 May, WHO has recorded a total of eight (five confirmed and three suspected) cases, including three deaths.

Hantavirus infections are relatively uncommon globally. The virus is primarily transmitted through direct contact with the urine, faeces, or saliva of infected rodents. Limited human to human transmission, specific to the Andes species, has been reported previously in community settings involving close and prolonged contact.

WHO and the relevant State public health authorities are managing the outbreak through a coordinated response including further in-depth investigations, case management and the implementation of risk-based, evidence-informed public health measures.

WHO has issued guidance for the management of hantavirus on board ships, in healthcare environments and for Individuals engaging in outdoor activities where endemic transmission is known.

A cruise ship passenger that travelled by air from Saint Helena to Johannesburg, died after arrival in South Africa, who has confirmed the diagnosis. South Africa has immediately implemented contact tracing of the passengers on the flight in accordance with public health guidelines and in collaboration with the airline. Other countries have implemented similar measures for travellers that might have been exposed during flights.

WHO currently assesses the risk to the global population as low and advises against the application of any travel or trade restrictions based on the current information available on this event.

ICAO considers the risk to aviation to be low in view of the WHO risk assessment, requests states and aviation stakeholders to adhere to WHO guidance and to assist the public health authorities with contact tracing in aviation. ICAO will continue to monitor the situation with WHO and our partners through the ICAO-WHO Memorandum of Understanding and will issue additional aviation-specific guidance should it be necessary.

[Hantavirus cluster linked to cruise ship travel, Multi-country](#)