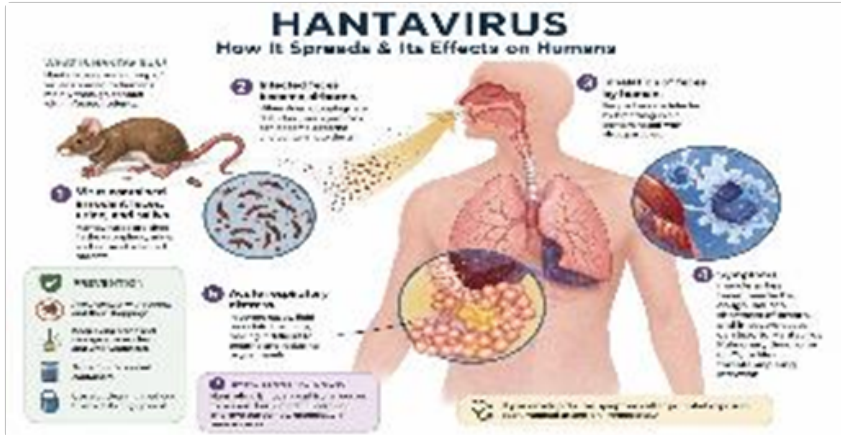




# WHO's action on Hantavirus Issue

Published On: 09-05-2026



## Why in News??

The World Health Organization (WHO) issued a Disease Outbreak News (DON) alert regarding a multi-country hantavirus cluster linked to the Dutch-flagged cruise ship MV Hondius. The outbreak has resulted in multiple suspected and confirmed cases, including deaths, leading to international contact tracing and public health surveillance across several countries.

## About the Outbreak:

The outbreak began aboard the polar expedition cruise ship MV Hondius, which departed Ushuaia, Argentina, in April 2026 for an Antarctic and South Atlantic voyage. Several passengers later developed severe respiratory illness associated with hantavirus infection. As of early May 2026, WHO reported multiple suspected and confirmed cases along with three deaths linked to the outbreak.

The outbreak is associated with the Andes virus strain of hantavirus, which is significant because it is the only known hantavirus strain capable of limited human-to-human transmission.

## About Hantavirus:

### What is Hantavirus?

Hantavirus is a group of viruses primarily transmitted to humans through contact with infected rodents, particularly through their urine, saliva, or droppings.

### Human infection can occur by:

Inhalation of contaminated aerosol particles

Direct contact with infected rodents

## Kamaraj IAS Academy

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040  
Phone: 044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477 / Whatsapp : 09710729833

Contaminated food or surfaces

In rare cases, certain strains such as the Andes virus may spread between humans through close contact.

### **Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS):**

The disease caused by hantavirus in the Americas is known as Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), a severe respiratory illness characterised by:

Fever

Muscle pain

Fatigue

Cough and breathing difficulty

Pulmonary failure in severe cases

The disease has a high fatality rate and currently has no specific antiviral treatment or vaccine.

### **International Public Health Response:**

WHO and Global Surveillance

WHO activated international monitoring under the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005).

### **Countries involved in contact tracing and surveillance include:**

Netherlands

United Kingdom

South Africa

Switzerland

Singapore

Spain

Passengers who disembarked earlier from the ship are being monitored for symptoms and possible transmission chains.

### **CDC Emergency Response:**

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reportedly classified the outbreak response as a “Level 3” emergency operation because passengers travelled internationally before the outbreak was confirmed.

### **Indian Connection:**

**Kamaraj IAS Academy**

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthy Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

Phone: **044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477 / Whatsapp : 09710729833**

According to reports, two Indian crew members aboard MV Hondius were also being monitored during the outbreak investigation. Health authorities are conducting precautionary surveillance and contact tracing to prevent any possible spread.

### **Significance of the Incident:**

Importance of Global Disease Surveillance

### **The outbreak demonstrates the importance of:**

International disease surveillance systems

Early detection mechanisms

Contact tracing

Cross-border public health cooperation

### **Cruise Ships and Disease Transmission:**

Cruise ships are considered high-risk environments for infectious disease outbreaks because of:

Closed and crowded settings

International passenger movement

Delayed medical isolation

Shared ventilation and facilities

The incident recalls earlier concerns related to infectious disease outbreaks on cruise ships during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Emerging Zoonotic Diseases:**

The outbreak highlights growing concerns regarding zoonotic diseases — diseases transmitted from animals to humans — especially amid increasing global travel and ecological changes.

### **About Andes Virus:**

The Andes virus is a hantavirus strain primarily found in South America, particularly Argentina and Chile. Unlike most hantaviruses, it has demonstrated limited human-to-human transmission, especially among close contacts and family members.