

## Situation Report (SitRep) - Suspected Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome Cluster on an Atlantic Cruise Vessel (originating from Argentina)

**Audience:** ESCMID members

**SitRep date:** 04 May 2026 (CEST), 17:30 h

**Primary sources used:**

- UN News report summarising WHO statements (published 03 May 2026). [[news.un.org](https://news.un.org)]
- WHO "Hantavirus Outbreak Toolbox" (updated May 2026). [[who.int](https://who.int)]

### 1) Executive Summary

- A cruise vessel travelling from Argentina has reported **six people affected by a respiratory illness**, with **three deaths** among the affected individuals.
- WHO has indicated **one confirmed hantavirus** (after testing in South Africa) **case so far** and **five additional suspected cases**, with **one patient in intensive care in South Africa**.
- WHO reports that **medical care is being provided onboard**, **viral sequencing is ongoing**, and WHO is supporting **medical evacuation** and a **full risk assessment**.
- **Rodent-associated exposure** as the leading hypothesis (notably an "adventure area" described as having rats with hantavirus), while not fully excluding **onboard rodent exposure** or a **close-contact transmission scenario** in very specific circumstances.
- **Vessel context and location (as publicly reported via UN News/WHO):** The cruise liner is reported to be operated by a **Dutch company**, departed **Argentina ~three weeks prior**, was heading to the **Canary Islands**, and was (at the time of reporting) **off the coast of Cabo Verde**.
- The ship has **~150 persons onboard**

### 2) Hantavirus: Transmission & Epidemiological Context (WHO Materials)

- **Primary transmission route:** Hantavirus infection is generally acquired through **inhalation of aerosolised particles** contaminated with infected rodent urine/faeces, or via **direct contact** with infected rodents or their excreta; bites/scratches are described as rare.
- **Person-to-person transmission:** Interpersonal transmission is **very unlikely**, but historical events in the Americas suggest **person-to-person transmission**, mainly associated with the **Andes virus**, under **close and prolonged contact** conditions.
- **Regional burden (Americas):** Up to **epidemiological week 47 of 2025**, eight countries in the Americas reported **229 confirmed Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) cases** and **59 deaths** (regional CFR **25.7%**), including Argentina and other Southern Cone countries.

### 3) Clinical Picture (For Awareness)

- **HPS** often begins with **influenza-like symptoms** (fever, myalgia, chills, headache, GI symptoms) and then potentially progresses after several days to **respiratory difficulty** and severe **cardiopulmonary syndrome**.
- **Incubation** is typically **1–3 weeks** (range **3–45 days**), and asymptomatic infections can occur.
- **Management: no specific treatment** and ICU-level respiratory support when severe disease develops. From pathophysiology perspectives (pulmonary extravasation), ECMO might be lifesaving.
- **Typically, high fatality case rate # 30-50%.**

### 4) Risk Appraisal (Evidence-Based, Limited to Available Sources)

- **Most consistent hypothesis at present:** Exposure linked to **rodents/rodent excreta** remains the most plausible route described,
- **Human-to-human transmission:** Not the dominant expectation; this is **very unlikely** and generally restricted to very close contact in specific Andes-virus-associated contexts in the Americas
- **Uncertainty remains:** WHO confirms that investigations, further lab testing, and sequencing are ongoing - so conclusions on viral type, exposure setting, and transmission dynamics may change.

### 5) Key Knowledge Gaps (What is *not yet* established in the cited sources)

- **Virus species/genotype** (e.g., Andes vs. other hantaviruses) has not been specified in the sources; sequencing is ongoing.
- Details on **case timelines** (symptom onset dates), **exposure windows**, and **contact tracing** outcomes are not provided in the cited summaries.
- The scope of onboard environmental findings