

Northern Iraq registers Congo fever death

6 May 2022

Iraqi authorities said one person died on Friday of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever as cases of the virus spread to the country's north.

Iraq has registered eight deaths from 40 cases of the illness, also known as Congo fever, since the start of the year, health ministry spokesman Seif al-Badr said in a statement.

Health authorities in Kirkuk, north of Baghdad, announced the province's first death from the illness on Friday.

The deceased was a butcher who had failed to follow health regulations, health official Ziad Khalaf said.

The disease is tick-borne and causes severe haemorrhaging, according to the World Health Organization.

People are generally infected through contact with the blood of infected animals, often after slaughtering livestock.

It can also be transmitted between humans through "close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected persons," according to the WHO.

The disease has a high fatality rate of between 10 and 40 percent of all cases.

Kirkuk authorities have prohibited the transport of cattle to or from the province.

Nineveh province, also in northern Iraq, registered its first case on Thursday, while central Babil province recorded one death on April 29.

Twenty-three of the cases have been in Dhi Qar province, the health ministry's Badr said.

The poor, largely rural southern province is known for rearing cattle, sheep and goats, all of which are potential carriers of the disease.

Badr told AFP earlier Friday that the country was not "in a state of epidemic".

He said cases were "limited" but acknowledged that the infection rate was "higher than the previous year".

Most of those infected have been cattle farmers and abattoir workers, according to the health ministry.

The WHO says Congo fever is endemic in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans.

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