

Deadly nose-bleed fever shocks Iraq as cases surge

Author:

Sun, 2022-05-29 23:13

NASIRIYAH, Iraq: Spraying a cow with pesticides, health workers target blood-sucking ticks at the heart of Iraq's worst detected outbreak of a fever that causes people to bleed to death.

The sight of the health workers, dressed in full protective kit, is one that has become common in the Iraqi countryside, as the Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever spreads, jumping from animals to humans.

This year, Iraq has recorded 19 deaths among 111 CCHF cases in humans, according to the World Health Organization.

The virus has no vaccine and onset can be swift, causing severe bleeding both internally and externally and especially from the nose. It causes death in as many as two-fifths of cases, according to medics.

"The number of cases recorded is unprecedented," said Haidar Hantouche, a health official in Dhi Qar province.

A poor farming region in southern Iraq, the province accounts for nearly half of Iraq's cases.

In previous years, cases could be counted "on the fingers of one hand," he added.

Transmitted by ticks, hosts of the virus include both wild and farmed animals such as buffalo, cattle, goats and sheep, all of which are common in Dhi Qar.

In the village of Al-Bujari, a team disinfects animals in a stable next to a house where a woman was infected. Wearing masks, goggles and overalls, the workers spray a cow and her two calves with pesticides.

A worker displays ticks that have fallen from the cow and been gathered into a container.

"Animals become infected by the bite of infected ticks," according to the World Health Organization.

"The CCHF virus is transmitted to people either by tick bites or through contact with infected animal blood or tissues during and immediately after slaughter," it adds.

The surge of cases this year has shocked officials, since numbers far exceed recorded cases in the 43 years since the virus was first documented in Iraq in 1979.

In his province, only 16 cases resulting in seven deaths had been recorded in 2021, Hantouche said. But this year Dhi Qar has recorded 43 cases, including eight deaths.

The numbers are still tiny compared with the COVID-19 pandemic – where Iraq has registered over 25,200 deaths and 2.3 million recorded cases, according to WHO figures – but health workers are worried.

Endemic in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans, CCHF's fatality rate is between 10 and 40 percent, the WHO says.

The WHO's representative in Iraq, Ahmed Zouiten, said there were several "hypotheses" for the country's outbreak.

They included the spread of ticks in the absence of livestock spraying campaigns during Covid in 2020 and 2021.

And "very cautiously, we attribute part of this outbreak to global warming, which has lengthened the period of multiplication of ticks," he said.

But "mortality seems to be declining," he added, as Iraq had mounted a spraying campaign while new hospital treatments had shown "good results."

Since the virus is "primarily transmitted" to people via ticks on livestock, most cases are among farmers, slaughterhouse workers and veterinarians, the WHO says.

"Human-to-human transmission can occur resulting from close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected persons," it adds.

Alongside uncontrolled bleeding, the virus causes intense fever and vomiting.

Authorities have put in place disinfection campaigns and are cracking down on abattoirs that do not follow hygiene protocols. Several provinces have also banned livestock movement across their borders.

Near Najaf, a city in the south, slaughterhouses are monitored by the authorities.



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[GCC chief condemns extremists, Israeli Knesset member for storming Al-Aqsa Mosque](#)

Author:

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Sun, 2022-05-29 22:55

RIYADH: The Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council condemned on Sunday the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque by extremists and a member of the Israeli Knesset under the protection of Israeli police.

Dr. Nayef Falah Al-Hajraf's condemnation comes as tens of thousands of flag-waving Israeli nationalists marched through the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem's Old City on Sunday.

Many marchers sang and danced as they wound their way through the streets.

Others sought confrontation, chanting "Death to Arabs."

Al-Hajraf said the new developments were a flagrant violation and a dangerous escalation.

He stressed the need for Israel to respect the historical, legal and religious situation in Jerusalem, and called on the international community to assume its responsibilities to preserve the safety of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam.

The Secretary-General urged Israel to abide by its obligations as an occupying power in accordance with international humanitarian law.



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Clashes hit Al-Aqsa amid outrage over provocative Israeli flag march
Visit by far-right Israeli lawmaker sparks Jerusalem unrest

People in Taiz disappointed after talks fail to end Houthi siege

Sun, 2022-05-29 21:46

AL-MUKALLA: Yemenis in Taiz, a densely populated city in the southwest of the country, have expressed disappointment after discussions between the Yemeni government and the Houthis in the Jordanian capital of Amman failed to lift the Houthi blockade on the city.

The UN Yemen envoy, Hans Grundberg, on Saturday said that the first round of talks did not lead to an agreement on opening roads in Taiz and the other provinces.

The announcement ruined the hopes of thousands of people in Taiz who voiced optimism that the UN-brokered discussions could bring an end to the siege.

“When the discussions started, we expressed hopes that the siege would be finally lifted,” Khaled Al-Qadhi, a photographer, told Arab News by telephone from the besieged city.



A demonstrator joins a protest demanding the end of the Taiz blockade. (AFP)

“But the hopes vanished when the Houthi negotiators showed up in talks with military uniform.”

The Iran-backed Houthis have imposed a siege on Taiz, Yemen’s third-largest

city, for the past seven years after they failed to capture the city after fierce resistance from government troops.

The Houthis blocked the main entrances and roads that link the city with Aden, Sanaa and Hodeidah and planted landmines and deployed snipers to target people attempting to pass through the blocked roads.

Al-Qadhi said that the Houthi siege has forced many patients battling cancer and kidney failure into using unpaved and steep roads to reach health facilities in the city.

"Some people in Taiz see their houses in the Houthi-controlled side of the city but cannot visit them due to the siege," Al-Qadhi said.

"They have to travel for seven to eight hours to reach them," the photographer added.

"The economic situation here is very difficult."

Discussions between the government and the Houthis began on Wednesday and were meant to reach an agreement on opening roads in Taiz and the other provinces under the UN-brokered truce.

The Yemeni government negotiators said that the Houthis resisted the idea of opening the main roads in Taiz and they suggested opening a new narrow road.

Local media reports said that the UN Yemen envoy would be visiting the port city of Aden, the interim capital of Yemen, to discuss opening roads in Taiz and extending the truce with the president of the Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Al-Alimi, and the government.

Yemenis urged their leaders to reject the Houthi proposal for opening small roads, pressuring them to push for the complete lifting of the Houthi blockade and reject any renewal of the truce if the Houthis refuse to end the siege.

"We want the Presidential Council to lift the siege in any way it sees fit – militarily or politically," Maher Al-Abesi, an activist, told Arab News.

"We want to live in peace like the rest of the provinces where people move safely between their villages and cities," said Al-Abesi.

Other Yemenis criticized their government for accepting the opening of Sanaa airport and Hodeidah port before the Houthi lifted their siege on Taiz.

But the Yemeni government officials responded by saying that they accepted opening the airport before ending the Taiz siege as to end the Houthi excuses for not accepting peace efforts to end the war.

"This great concession during the truce was meant to build confidence and also to put the Houthis in a narrow corner to accept going to negotiations to get Yemen out of this long-running war," Najeeb Ghallab, an undersecretary at the Information Ministry, told Arab News, adding that the Houthis will be

using the truce to build up their forces outside the city before launching a new military operation to take control of it.

The International Crisis Group said on May 19 that the Houthis have no interest in ending their siege on Taiz as it allows them to choke the city economically and keep their rivals holed up.

“The Houthis have had little incentive to improve road access to the city: They control the governorate’s economic heart and are keeping their main local rivals boxed in,” the organization said.



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Yemen government, Houthis discuss final draft of agreement on opening roads in Taiz
Talks begin between Yemeni government and Houthis over reopening of Taiz road

[Sudan’s military leader lifts state of](#)

emergency

Sun, 2022-05-29 21:42

KHARTOUM: Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan on Sunday lifted a state of emergency imposed since last year's military coup, the ruling sovereign council said.

Sudan has been reeling from deepening unrest since Burhan led the October 25 coup, upending a fragile transition following the 2019 ouster of president Omar Bashir.

Burhan "issued a decree lifting the state of emergency nationwide," the council said in a statement.

The order was made "to prepare the atmosphere for a fruitful and meaningful dialogue that achieves stability for the transitional period," it added.

Sudan, one of the world's poorest countries, is also struggling from a plunging economy due to decades of international isolation and mismanagement under Bashir.

The UN, along with the African Union and regional bloc IGAD, have been pushing to facilitate Sudanese-led talks to resolve the crisis.

Western governments have backed the UN-AU-IGAD bid and urged Sudanese factions to participate in the process.

Burhan has pledged to free political detainees to set the stage for talks among Sudanese factions.

Last month, Sudanese authorities released several anti-coup civilian leaders.



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Sudan women's activist wins human rights prize
One killed in Sudan anti-coup protests: medics

[Turkey shows off drones at Azerbaijan air show](#)

Author:

Sun, 2022-05-29 00:08

BAKU: Looping in the air at lightning speed, Turkish drones like those used against Russian forces in Ukraine draw cheers from the crowd at an air show in Azerbaijan.

Turkey is showcasing its defense technology at the aerospace and technology festival "Teknofest" that started in Azerbaijan's capital Baku this week. Turkey's TB2 drones are manufactured by aerospace company Baykar Defense, where Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's increasingly prominent son-in-law Selcuk Bayraktar is chief technology officer.

On Wednesday, Bayraktar flew over Baku aboard an Azerbaijani air force Mikoyan MiG-29 plane. One of his combat drones, the "Akinci," accompanied the flight.

A video showing Bayraktar in command of the warplane, dressed in a pilot's uniform decorated with Turkish and Azerbaijani flag patches, went viral on social media.

"This has been a childhood dream for me," Bayraktar told reporters after the flight.

Turkey's drones first attracted attention in 2019 when they were used during the war in Libya to thwart an advance by rebel commander, General Khalifa Haftar, against the government in Tripoli.

They were then again put into action the following year when Turkey-backed Azerbaijan in recapturing most of the land it lost to separatist Armenian forces in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Azerbaijani audience members at the aviation festival applauded during a display of TB2 drones, which are now playing a prominent role against invading Russian forces in Ukraine.

A senior official from the Turkish defense industry said his country was facing a wide spectrum of "threats," including the Kurdistan Workers' Party and Daesh.

The PKK is listed as a terror group by Ankara and its Western allies. But with NATO allies – including the US – having imposed embargoes on Turkey, Ankara was forced to take matters into its own hands to build defense equipment, the official said. "The situation is changing now with the war in Ukraine," the official said.

Turkey has been looking to modernize its air force after it was kicked out of the F-35 fighter jet program because of its purchase of Russia's S-400

missile defense system.

But Ankara's role in trying to mediate an end to the Ukraine conflict through direct negotiations may have helped improve its relations with Washington in the past months.

In April, US President Joe Biden's administration said it now believed that supplying Turkey with F-16 fighter jets would serve Washington's strategic interests.

Michael Boyle, of Rutgers University-Camden in the US, said Turkish drones such as Bayraktar TB2 drones were "increasingly important to modern conflicts because they have spread so widely."



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