

# Saudi warns of MERS surge linked to baby camels

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Saudi authorities warned Tuesday of a possible spike soon in cases of the deadly Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) because of the risk posed from newborn camels.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has cited the preliminary results of studies indicating that people working with camels are at increased risk of infection from MERS-CoV, and young camels are particularly susceptible.

Doctor Abdul Aziz bin Saeed, who heads the [health ministry](#) centre coordinating the response to MERS, told AFP a surge typically occurs around this time of year and "could be very likely" again without proper health education efforts.

"By this time they are two months, three months (old)... They are vulnerable to the infection and so you have more camels at risk of getting the infection. So you have more infected camels right now circulating," he said.

The kingdom has been hardest hit by the virus, which was first identified three years ago. A total of 857 people have been infected there, 366 of whom have died, according to health ministry data.

A public awareness campaign is ongoing, with the WHO urging people working with [camels](#) to pay particular attention to personal hygiene.

The ministry recommends proper hand-washing, and coughing and sneezing into a tissue, as among the steps to reduce the risk of [infection](#).

Symptoms of MERS can include fever, a cough and difficulty breathing.

More than 20 countries have been affected by MERS since 2012.

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