

Japan woman dies of tick disease after bitten by sick cat

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A Japanese woman has died from a tick-borne virus after being bitten by a stray cat in what is possibly the world's first animal-to-human transmission of the disease.

The woman in her 50s died some 10 days after being bitten by the cat last year after she took the animal to a veterinary hospital.

Authorities have since confirmed that she developed SFTS, a disease transmitted by bites from a certain group of virus-carrying ticks.

Human-to-human infections of the tick virus through blood contact have been reported, but ministry officials believe the Japanese woman's death could be the first case of a human dying from the bite of an infected animal.

"No reports on animal-to-human transmission [cases](#) have been made so far," a health ministry official told AFP on Tuesday.

"It's still not confirmed the virus came from the cat, but it's possible that it's the (world's) first case," she said.

Another official said there were no signs the [woman](#) had been bitten by a tick.

SFTS, or severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome, triggers symptoms including severe fever, vomiting, and diarrhoea.

In Japan some 60 people contract the disease every year from [tick bites](#) with a fatality rate of some 20 percent, according to the Japanese ministry.

No preventive medicines or vaccines are available for the [disease](#).

"There are only symptomatic therapies, such as dealing with [fever](#) or diarrhoea," the ministry official said.

"The best way to avoid the infection is not to be bitten by ticks," she added.

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