

Lassa fever kills 29 in Nigeria

January 26 2020

Nigerian health authorities have announced stepped-up emergency measures to tackle a rise in Lassa fever cases after 29 people died this month.

"As at 24th of January 2020, 195 confirmed cases and 29 deaths had been reported in 11 states," the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) said in a statement Saturday.

A national emergency operations centre had been activated to coordinate the response "to the increasing number of Lassa fever cases" across the country.

Endemic to Nigeria, Lassa fever belongs to the same family as the Ebola and Marburg viruses, but is much less deadly.

The virus is spread by contact with rat faeces or urine. It starts with fever and can, in worst case scenarios, lead to severe bleeding and organ failure.

Nigeria declared an outbreak of Lassa fever a year ago and around 170 people died from the virus in 2019.

The number of cases usually climbs in January due to weather conditions during the dry season.

Almost 90 percent of the recent confirmed cases have been in Edo, Ondo and Ebonyi states in southern Nigeria, but there have also been

deaths in the north.

The NCDC said that compared to the same period last year the [fatality rate](#) had dropped from 23.4 percent to 14.8 percent.

It encouraged Nigerians to "practise good hygiene and take measures to protect themselves and their families".

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation with a population of some 200 million, has five laboratories with the capability to diagnose Lassa [fever](#).

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