

Iraq's Congo fever death toll rises to 27: ministry

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Iraq's death toll from tick-borne Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever has increased to 27 this year, according to the latest figures released Saturday by authorities struggling to contain an outbreak.

The latest figure marks a sharp uptick from last month's toll, when 12 deaths were recorded among the 55 cases registered since the start of the year.

Also known as Congo fever, the disease causes severe bleeding. People usually catch it through contact with the blood of infected animals, according to the World Health Organization.

"Since the start of the year, 162 cases of haemorrhagic fever have been recorded, including 27 deaths," [health ministry](#) spokesman Seif al-Badr said Saturday.

He said a first death had been recorded in northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, adding that half of the total recorded cases had recovered.

Endemic in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans, the disease has a [fatality rate](#) between 10 and 40 percent, the WHO says.

The spokesman added that the ministry is working to detect cases as early as possible.

The southern province of Dhi Qar, known for breeding cattle and other livestock, is the site of the highest number of cases, with 61 having fallen ill so far.

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.

Livestock farmers and slaughterhouse workers are the most affected by the disease, the health ministry said.

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