Niger: Rift Valley Fever (Situation as of 28 September 2016)

Situation update

The Ministry of Health of Niger notified the World Health Organization (WHO) of an outbreak of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) on 30 August 2016. The first suspected cases were reported from Tchintabaraden health district in Tahoua region on 2 August, 2016. On 31 August 2016, an outbreak investigation team composed of the Ministry of Health and WHO staff were deployed in the field to carry-out an initial investigation and support the implementation of immediate response measures. The samples collected were sent to Institute Pasteur Dakar on 9 September 2016 and turned out positive for Rift Valley Fever.

As of 28 September 2016, a total of 78 human cases including 26 deaths (CFR: 33%) were reported from Tchintabaraden health district in Tahoua region. Most of the cases are male (66%), farmers or animal breeders. Cases and deaths attributed to RVF are also being reported in animals. A total of six animal samples were tested positive for RVF as at 26 September 2016.

The risk associated with this outbreak is high given its potential for spread to neighboring countries, limited local laboratory capacity to detect and confirm RVF cases, prevailing security situation in the sub-region and movement of the animal and human population. Nomadic stockbreeders from Niger and neighboring countries are gathering in the areas called In-gall with their herds to celebrate Cure Salée (a yearly festival of the nomads that marks end of the rainy season). It takes place in the last week of September. Around 2 million cattle and even more small ruminant are currently reported to be present in the area. Following end of the rainy season, nomadic animal population will move to other Southern Sub-Saharan countries and irrigation system along the Niger River where pastures will still be available.

Actions undertaken

In line with the International Health Regulations, WHO supported the Ministry of Health in carrying out the initial outbreak investigation which led to the collection of human and animal samples, confirmation of the outbreak and notification by the Ministry of Health of RVF. WHO also deployed a team of experts in the field to support the Ministry of Health in enhancing the coordination and response to the outbreak.

Given the zoonotic nature of the outbreak, WHO is closely working with FAO and other partners to support response measures in line with the One Health Approach. Further information on response operations will be made available as soon as it becomes available.