

Saudi Arabia urges MERS precautions around camels

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Saudi Arabia on Sunday warned those dealing with camels to take precautions as the number of infections in the kingdom from a respiratory illness linked to the animals rises further.

The Ministry of Agriculture urged people who come in contact with camels to "exercise caution and follow [preventive measures](#)," according to a report on the official Saudi Press Agency.

It said the ministry issued the advice after scientific studies commissioned by the Health Ministry proved a connection between camels and the virus that causes the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome.

The guidance came after the country reported six more deaths from MERS on Saturday. A total of 139 people have died and 480 have been confirmed to have contracted the virus in Saudi Arabia since it was discovered in 2012.

MERS belongs to a family of viruses known as coronaviruses that include both the common cold and SARS, or severe acute respiratory syndrome, which killed some 800 people in a [global outbreak](#) in 2003. MERS can cause symptoms including fever, breathing problems, pneumonia and kidney failure.

Scientists believe camels likely play a role in initial infections. The disease can then spread between people, but typically only when they are in close contact with one another, such as with infected patients and health-care workers.

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