



## Blaming Camels for the MERS Transmission

### Description

## What is the MERS?

MERS was first detected in 2012. But since then, it has been regularly reported from multiple countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. **Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS)** is an illness that can cause respiratory infection. It is caused by a common type of virus called coronavirus. These viruses cause mild to moderate respiratory illness. But in some cases the symptoms are severe.

### The Latest News (July 2023) of MERS

A 28-year-old man has tested positive for (MERS-CoV) in Alain, Abu Dhabi on the border with Oman, the World Health Organization said on Monday. The affectee had no contact with the camels.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/man-tests-positive-mers-abu-dhabi-near-oman-border-who-2023-07-24/>

### Not a matter of concern

There is no immediate cause for worry or concern, a public health analyst and epidemiologist have told *Down To Earth (DTE)* a day after the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that a man had been infected with the deadly Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Dr. Abdul Raziq Kakar, international camel dairying consultant, founder of World Camel Day, and Camel4Life International, who resides in Al Ain, however, told *DTE* that the case should not be used to villainize camels.

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/health/no-immediate-cause-for-concern-epidemiologist-tells-dte-as-mers-case-detected-in-uae-90818>

### A MERS Case Reported was from UAE in February 2021

The case is a 39-year-old male national, owner of a camel farm. He developed a fever and cough on 18 January and visited a private hospital several times with no improvement. The condition of the case worsened, and on 24 January, a chest X-ray confirmed the diagnosis of pneumonia. On 26 January, he was admitted to a private hospital and was transferred to a governmental hospital on 28 January. A nasopharyngeal swab was collected on 31 January and tested positive for MERS-CoV by reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) on 1 February at the Shiekh Khalifa Medical Center laboratory in Abu Dhabi. He has no underlying conditions. SARS-CoV-2 testing was performed more than once, and it was negative. No history of previous infection or exposure to SARS-CoV-2 was reported. The case reported a history of close contact with dromedary camels at his farm in the 14 days prior to the onset of symptoms. No travel history was reported during the same period. Currently, the patient is in stable condition. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2021-DON314>

## Is MERS Really Transmitting from Camel?

It is the burning question of the day. An article was published in a local newspaper regarding the presence of MERS-CoV in camel nasal discharge. As per the *'The National' newspaper report*, the MERS-CoV is present in almost the majority of the camels in Africa and the Middle East.

## Bats and Camels are the Natural Reservoirs of MERS CoV

MERS-CoV is found in Bats and camels both. Both animals are the reservoirs for it. One Chinese study revealed that it is found in the Bat only.

## Conclusive Remarks of Famous Camelologists

According to *Bernard Faye* (the famous camelologist and veterinarian), in his camel farm in KSA, all the camels were MERS-CoV positive but there was no sign of Virus transmission among the workers. Also, no camel showed signs of infection in the 3 years period of time. (Pers. Comm.)



FAYE, Bernard, famous camelologist. He is a French Veterinarian and global camel researcher.

***The author (Camelologist Dr. Abdul Raziq Kakar)*** has been working closely with camels for the last 9 years and has contact with at least 400 camels daily. Also, many members of my team have close contact with camels on a daily basis. We have not noticed any camel or human has shown any sign of sickness. But if we check the nasal and fecal samples, we will find the viruses and other microorganisms including MERS CoV.

Many other colleagues (camel owners, farmers, workers, and more) said that they had not noticed any such infection. According to a very reputable research study conducted by ***Dr. Wernery*** and his team (Wernery is the scientific director of the central veterinary lab of Dubai), the ***virus is rarely transmitted from camel to human.***

**Some very important and conclusive remarks/findings**

- Only there is very little chance of transmission for those who are already very weak and sick and facing immuno-depression.
- It does not affect the camel's health either.
- Only nasal discharge can be noticed in newborn calves infected with MERS
- The virus is found in nasal discharge and transmitted via nasal way, therefore studies conducted used nasal swabs as the source of the virus
- ***The camel products, especially the milk and meat are 100% safe as this virus has no viability below 4C and above 20C***
- Also, the virus is not discharged in milk and meat. There is no reason to consider that camel milk or meat could be a way of contamination as the virus is excreted only by the respiratory way

### **The deep reality**

When I read much more about MERS and camels, I reached the conclusion that blaming camels for MERS is a political/business motive to terrify the people and sell vaccines in the future. In business, there is no rule at all.

### **The take-home message**

So there are no worries, do not avoid camel products. Please use camel milk as before. Camel milk is a natural pharmacy, that boosts immunity and keeps infections at bay.

### **Further reading**

- [Blaming Dromedary Camel For MERS](#)
- [MERS outbreak: WHO, South Korea present joint assessment results](#)

#### **Date Created**

July 2023

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