May 15, 2026

Key Takeaways

- **Uncontrolled spread of hantavirus is unlikely, with Metaculus forecasters assigning a 2% chance of WHO declaring it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern this year.**
- **Forecasters continue to lower their 2026 measles case estimates to 3,498 (50% prediction interval [2,850 4,445]) as the rate of new cases decelerates, but remain wary of additional outbreaks.**
- **Other emerging diseases remain low-probability, with local New World screwworm transmission at 18% and Clade I Mpox cases at 27 (50% prediction interval [28, 47]) with a 3.4% chance of exceeding 100 cases before 2027.**

A Closer Look

Hantavirus

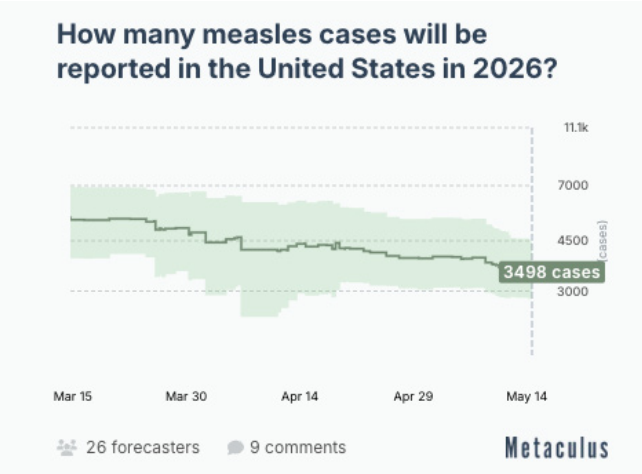
Following the recent cluster of hantavirus infections associated with the cruise ship MV Hondius, public health authorities in multiple countries have been monitoring passengers and contacts for the rare and deadly disease. Despite warnings that more human-to-human transmission may have occurred in the time before hantavirus was detected, forecasters put the probability of at least 5 non-passengers being linked to this outbreak at only 15%. They estimate the chance of WHO declaring hantavirus a Public Health Emergency of International Concern this year at an even lower 2% probability.

Forecasters point to the fact that transmission typically only occurs after the onset of acute symptoms, which keeps transmission rates low and makes quarantining easier than for other diseases. However, the incubation period is relatively long (1-8 weeks), which can make contact tracing and self-isolation difficult. Potential cases could arise from people who were exposed to cases before quarantine started (e.g. from contact with the passenger who traveled while symptomatic) or from gaps in quarantine or self-isolation procedures (e.g. Dutch hospital staff breaking biohazard protocols).

As of this publication, there are no confirmed cases of secondary infection linked to the initial cruise ship outbreak.

Measles

As of May 7, 2026, 1,842 confirmed measles cases were reported in the United States in 2026, with 25 total outbreaks across the country. This represents a decelerating trend in new cases compared to earlier this year, and forecasters have revised their 2026 estimates downwards to 3,498 cases, with a 50% prediction interval of 2,850 to 4,445. They now assign less than a 3% probability of cases exceeding 10,000. While new cases continue to decline, Pro Forecasters acknowledge that the seasonal pattern of measles may increase cases this fall, as well as the ongoing possibility of a single large outbreak.



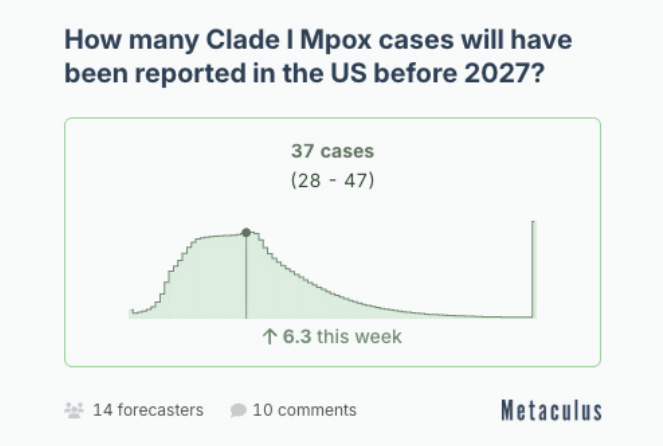
Current hospitalizations remain at 6% of reported measles cases, still far below last year's 11%. Forecasters have slightly lowered their estimate to 7.1% hospitalized this year, with a 50% prediction interval of 6.3% to 8.0%. They do not expect the hospitalization rate to get as high as last year's unless there is a widespread outbreak.

Forecasters increased their estimates to an 80% chance the Pan American Health Organization will revoke the US's measles elimination status before 2027. While the numbers meet the criteria for status revocation, forecasters are not completely confident due to the relatively short time left before November's review meeting.

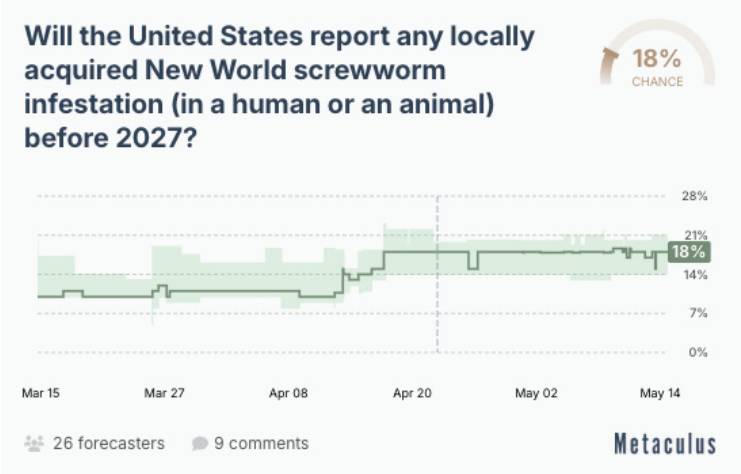
This project is supported in part by the National Science Foundation under Award No. 2438211. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this project are those of Metaculus and our forecasters, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation. All current forecasts can be found at Metaculus' Respiratory Outlook 2025/26.

Other diseases

Forecasters estimate that the total number of Clade I Mpox cases will rise to 37, with a 50% prediction interval of 28 to 47. They assign a 3.4% probability to outbreaks pushing the total over 100 cases, noting the possibility of an uptick in cases during summer travel months based on historical trends. They suspect some cases may be going undetected, evidenced by wastewater detection of Clade Ib in monkeypox in Hawaii (despite no reported cases) and CDC's testing pause.



Forecasters continue to put the probability of local New World screwworm transmission in the US this year (whether in humans or animals) at 18%. Cases were recently reported in the northern region of Coahuila, 119 miles from the border with Texas, suggesting that active suppression efforts in that area may not be entirely enough to control spread.



Methodology

Metaculus develops forecasting programs to improve decision-making and public coordination on topics of global importance and operates one of the world's largest forecasting platforms. The Respiratory Outlook 2025/26 initiative is designed to harness the effectiveness of crowd forecasting for real-time decision-making, aiding public health officials in responding to ongoing epidemiological changes and better anticipating future conditions. Five Metaculus Pro Forecasters, among the most accurate forecasters on Metaculus, are contributing to the Respiratory Outlook 2025/26 initiative.