

AUGUST 2025

Public Health Dispatch



FEATURED ARTICLE

World Health Organization. *Disease outbreak news; Yellow fever in the region of the Americas*. May 16, 2025. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2025-DON570> (accessed 5/29/2025)

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Increasing cases of Yellow fever in South America

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND?

Yellow fever is a vaccine-preventable, mosquito-borne viral disease endemic to parts of the Americas. Historically, outbreaks have predominantly occurred in the Amazon basin. Between 1960 and 2022, the Americas reported 9397 confirmed cases and 3315 deaths due to yellow fever. In 2023, there were 41 confirmed cases and 23 deaths across 4 countries. In 2024, the number increased to 61 confirmed cases and 30 deaths across 5 countries. The disease can range from asymptomatic to severe, with symptoms including fever, muscle pain, and, in severe cases, liver and kidney failure. A single dose of the yellow fever vaccine provides lifelong immunity. Unfortunately, the supply of the vaccine has been severely constrained recently and deemed insufficient to cover the routine regional demand.

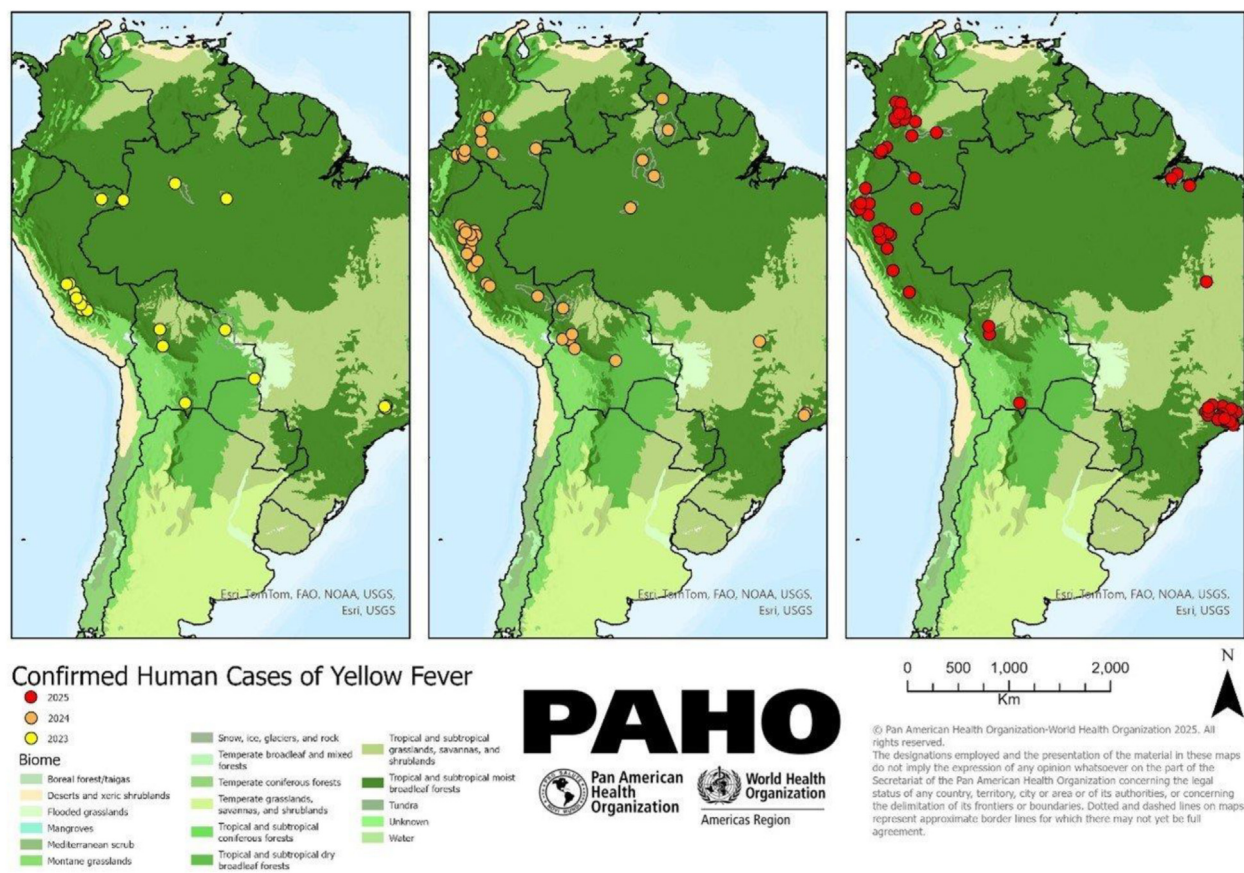
WHAT IS NEW?

As of April 26, 2025, 5 countries in the Americas—Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru—have reported 212 confirmed human cases of yellow fever, including 85 deaths, indicating a case fatality rate of 40%. This represents a threefold increase compared with the previous year. Notably, cases have emerged outside traditional endemic areas, such as the states of São Paulo in Brazil and the Tolima department in Colombia. Many affected individuals had no history of yellow fever vaccination and had exposure to forested areas, either occupationally or recreationally. The current situation is driven by increased cycles of transmission in wooded areas but with potential

spillover into urban areas. The World Health Organization has classified the overall risk in the region of the Americas as high, citing factors such as high fatality rates, varying vaccination coverage, and limited vaccine supply. Given the limited vaccine supply and the disease's severity, the WHO recommends heightened vigilance and preventive strategies to contain the spread of this outbreak.

WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE FOR TRANSPLANT PROVIDERS AND PATIENTS?

Yellow fever can cause severe disease, and fatal cases among solid organ transplant recipients have been reported. Given the current outbreak's expansion into new regions and the high case fatality rate, there is a risk of yellow fever to spread into more urban areas, impacting not only local communities, which include not only immunocompromised individuals but also international travelers. Although the vaccine is highly effective in preventing yellow fever, it contains attenuated live virus, and it is contraindicated for transplant recipients. Therefore, it is important for transplant providers to stay informed about this evolving outbreak and consider yellow fever in the right clinical setting in patients returning from affected areas. In addition, providers should counsel their immunocompromised patients who are considering travel to these areas regarding both the risk of yellow fever and preventive measures. This includes mosquito bite prevention strategies, such as using chemical name, N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide (DEET) containing insect repellent, wearing



protective clothing, and staying in accommodations with proper mosquito control.