

c Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever in Free State Province

A case of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF) was confirmed in a 45-year-old veterinary assistant from Kroonstad, Free State Province. The patient was bitten by *hyalomma* ticks (also known as 'bontpoot' ticks (Figure 1) on 24 October 2018. The patient developed fever and headache on 26 October and sought medical consultation on 27 October 2018. The patient also complained of muscle pain and nausea on 27 October 2018. Given the exposure history and identification of the ticks involved, CCHF was highly considered in the differential diagnosis of the patient. The platelet count on admission was normal ($250 \times 10^9/L$), and there was no evidence of liver dysfunction. Patients with CCHF typically present with normal bloods early on in the disease. The clinical diagnosis was based on the recognition of the tick species, the patient's symptoms and clinical experience with CCHF cases. This patient presented early on day 2-3 of illness onset.

Blood samples collected on 27 October tested RT-PCR positive. The patient is receiving medical attention with strict infection prevention and control measures in place. Subsequent testing confirmed a progressive leucopaenia and thrombocytopenia, but no liver dysfunction.

CCHF is transmitted through the bite of the *hyalomma* (or 'bontpoot') ticks. More than two

thirds of cases report such exposures. Few cases involved transmission of the virus through contact with infected animal blood and tissues. Strict infection prevention and control measures are required during the management of CCHF patients to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus to healthcare workers. Secondary cases of CCHF involving healthcare workers or laboratory workers have been noted on four occasions since 1981.

For 2018 to date, a total of two cases of CCHF (including the case reported here) has been reported. The first case was reported from the North West Province. During 2017, a total of eight CCHF cases was reported from the Northern Cape (n=6) and Free State (n=2) provinces.

For more information on CCHF, please visit www.nicd.ac.za

Source: Centre for Emerging Zoonotic and Parasitic Diseases, NICD-NHLS; januszp@nicd.ac.za



Figure 1. Two *hyalomma* ticks that the patient removed from his lower legs (with permission from the patient).