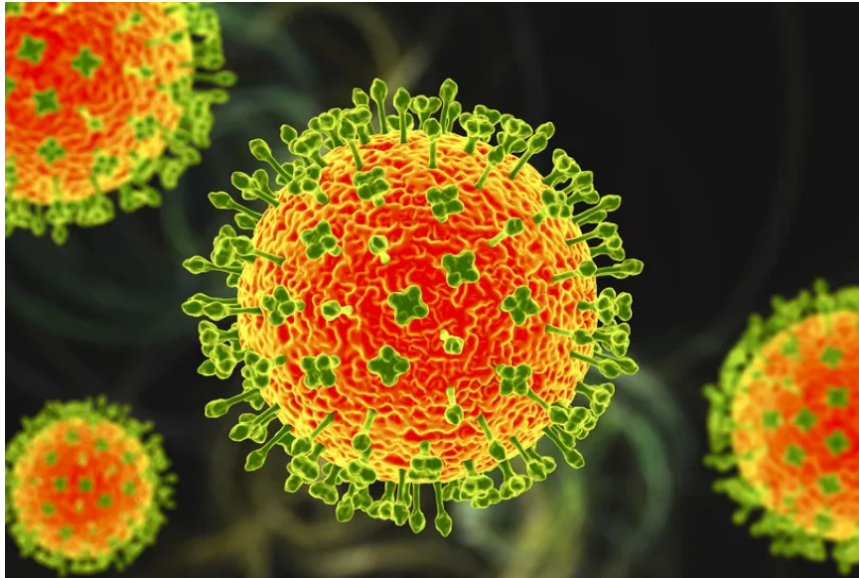




New 'Camp Hill' virus discovered in Alabama is relative of deadly Nipah — the 1st of its kind in the US



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However, scientists say there is currently "no evidence" that it has infected humans and the risk of it doing so is "likely lowclose relative of the deadly Nipah and Hendra viruses has been detected in North America for the first time — specifically, in the U.S. state of Alabama. The pathogen, which scientists have named Camp Hill virus, was detected in four northern short-tailed shrews (*Blarina brevicauda*).

The animals were caught in 2021 near a town of the same name in Tallapoosa County, Alabama. After being captured for a study, the animals had been dissected and their organs frozen for later analyses; it was in those analyses that the virus was discovered.

Camp Hill virus is a type of henipavirus, a broad group of viruses that typically infect bats but have been known to "spill over" into various mammals, including humans. In people, henipaviruses can cause severe respiratory illness and a type of inflammation of the brain known as encephalitis. Prominent henipaviruses known to infect humans include Hendra virus and Nipah virus.

The former virus was first detected in Australia in 1994 and has a case-fatality rate of around 60%. The latter germ has caused disease outbreaks across Southeast Asia since being initially detected in Malaysia in 1998, and it kills between 40% and 70% of people infected.

Related: Deadly Nipah virus kills boy in India, prompts worries over The detection of Camp Hill virus is significant because it marks the first time a henipavirus has been detected in North America. That's according to the scientists who discovered it, who released a paper Jan. 17 in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*.

The discovery raises concerns that henipaviruses may be more widespread than once thought. In particular, it provides evidence that *B. brevicauda* shrews — which can be found across central and eastern

North America — can harbor these types of viruses, along with other germs already confirmed to cause human disease. It's possible that Camp Hill virus may pose a risk to humans, perhaps spreading through direct contact with infected animals or their feces and urine, the researchers suggested