

# SHAMONDA VIRUS DISINFORMATION: THE MATRYOSHKA MODEL IN ACTION

UNCLASSIFIED | NON CLASSIFIÉ

OCTOBER 2026



## A REAL VIRUS, A FABRICATED OUTBREAK

In June 2026, we published *The Matryoshka War*, examining how biological disinformation operates through interconnected layers of state messaging, media amplification and local anxieties. The model describes how a foundational narrative—that international public health cooperation conceals dangerous biological activities—is repeatedly adapted to new countries, laboratories and disease outbreaks.

Four months later, a video circulating online offers a striking snapshot of this process in real time.

On 22 October, French and European public health authorities reported the first documented human infection with Shamonda virus, a pathogen primarily affecting livestock and transmitted by biting midges. The patient, who was severely immunocompromised, had died earlier that month, although whether the virus contributed to his death remained under investigation. French authorities identified no risk to the general population.

## FROM A REAL INFECTION TO A FABRICATED OUTBREAK

Within days, an entirely different account was circulating online.

A video attributed to the 'Foundation to Battle Injustice' claimed that a Ukrainian laboratory in Lviv had been conducting gain-of-function experiments on Shamonda virus. According to the video, defective ventilation systems had released a mutated strain capable of spreading between humans, causing severe neurological disease and killing up to 40 per cent of those infected. An anonymous German epidemiologist supposedly provided insider evidence, while Ukrainian authorities were accused of concealing 50 infections. The video demanded immediate European border closures and travel bans against Ukraine.

None of these allegations was supported by verifiable evidence.

*The Shamonda story did not need to invent a new conspiracy theory. It simply inserted a new pathogen into an established narrative.*

## HOW THE MATRYOSHKA NARRATIVE TAKES SHAPE

The case illustrates several features of the Matryoshka Model.

First, **the foundational narrative was already in place.** For years, Russian state institutions and aligned information networks have promoted allegations that Western-supported laboratories in Ukraine conduct dangerous or covert biological activities. The Shamonda story did not need to establish this premise. It simply inserted a new pathogen into an established narrative.

Second, **the story acquired apparent credibility through local specificity.** It named the Lviv Regional Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, invoked the German Biosecurity Programme, referenced an anonymous foreign expert and deployed scientific terminology about HEPA filters, aerosol transmission and gain-of-function research. These details made the allegations appear investigative and technically informed, despite the absence of supporting evidence.



Third, a **genuine public health event became the basis for a manufactured geopolitical threat**. The documented infection in France provided the initial hook. The narrative then relocated the supposed source of danger to Ukraine, transforming a legitimate epidemiological development into an allegation of laboratory misconduct, official concealment and cross-border danger.

This is precisely the mechanism identified in our Matryoshka research: **real outbreaks, real laboratories and real international cooperation programmes are absorbed into a pre-existing geopolitical story.**

*The pathogen changes. The laboratory changes. The underlying narrative remains the same.*

## CHALLENGING THE NARRATIVE BEFORE IT TAKES HOLD

The response also matters. Ukraine's Public Health Centre and the Lviv laboratory have explicitly rejected the allegations. The laboratory states that it has never received, stored or studied Shamonda virus and has experienced no associated biosafety incident. Ukrainian authorities report no human or animal detections of the virus in the country.

Whether the video will be amplified further through state-aligned media or diplomatic channels remains to be seen. That wider feedback loop is an important part of the Matryoshka Model, but cannot be established from the video alone.

For now, the Shamonda case captures the model at the moment of narrative construction. A real disease event is connected to a real laboratory, surrounded by invented scientific detail and placed inside a longstanding geopolitical accusation.

*Real outbreaks, real laboratories and real international cooperation programmes are absorbed into a pre-existing geopolitical story.*

Read the full report here:



Enquiries should be directed to [GPWMD.CounterDisinfo@gmail.com](mailto:GPWMD.CounterDisinfo@gmail.com)