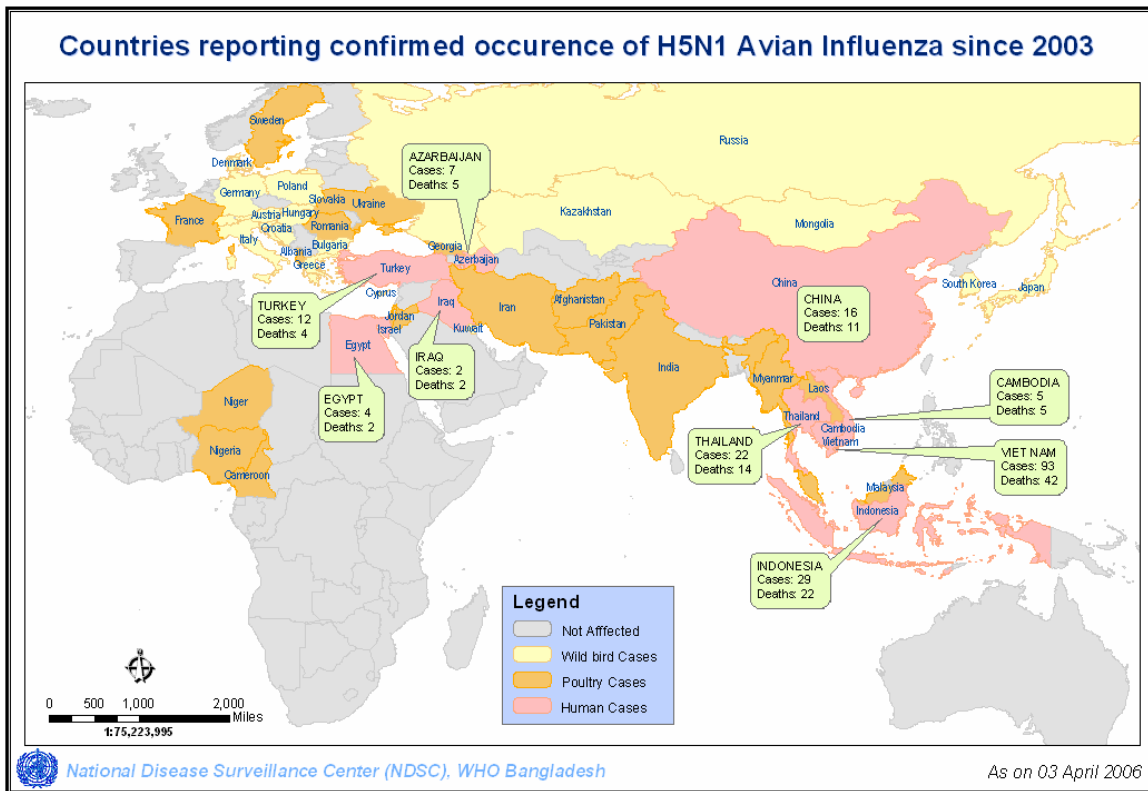


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World Bank approves anti-bird flu loan to Nigeria 2006-04-02 03:27:03

LAGOS, April 1 (Xinhua) -- The World Bank has approved a credit of 50 million U.S. dollars to support Nigeria's efforts to deal with the deadly bird flu, according to a bank statement obtained on Saturday.

"It aims to prevent the further spread of the highly pathogenic avian influenza to other parts of Nigeria not yet infected by the virus ... through early detection and rapid response measures," the statement said.

This credit will also help "farmers and veterinary and health services tackle the virus at its animal source and reduce opportunities for transmission to humans" and the government "prepare the necessary control measures to respond to a possible influenza pandemic," it said.

The credit is provided on standard International Development Association (IDA) terms, with a commitment fee of 0.35 percent, a service charge of 0.75 percent over a 40 year period of maturity which includes a 10-year grace period

Nigeria is the first country in Africa to report the presence of the H5N1 virus and the disease has now spread to 12 of the 36 states as well as the capital Abuja. The government has blamed illegal imports of poultry for the outbreak since January.

Editor: Luan Shanglin (www.chinaview.cn)

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Sixth bird flu-suspected case reported in Egypt

CAIRO, April 1 (KUNA) -- The Egyptian government announced on Saturday it was carrying out sample tests on people who have been in close contact with birds or work on farms in a bid to contain the spread of the bird flu which has infected a number of people.

The government yesterday suspected that a young boy might have been infected by the virus in Al-Fayoum governorate, raising the number of suspected cases to six.

The boy was believed to have culled some birds in one of the infected farms.

The boy's case was reported by the Jordanian Health Ministry when he began feeling flu-like symptoms, a matter which triggered the ministry to report the case to the Egyptian Health ministry through the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Jordanian Health Ministry, when contacted about the condition of the boy, stated that his condition was stable and is being followed up closely.

KUNA 012043 Apr 06NNNN

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Steps taken to prevent bird flu in Bangladesh

By BSS, Dhaka

Mon, 3 Apr 2006, 10:35:00

The Government has taken all out preparations to prevent bird flu from the country, said Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Khondakar Mosharraf Hossain here on Monday.

"All concerned ministries have formulated a coordinated national work plan and taken preparations to check any out break of avian flu in the country," he said.

The minister was speaking at an awareness building meeting organized by Beximco Pharmaceuticals, a drug manufacturing company, on bird flu at the conference room of the ministry of health and family welfare.

He said the government has directed all field level officials of the ministry of livestock to ensure round the clock observation in all poultry farms so that they could take immediate steps if they found any single case of bird flu.

The New Nation

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CHRONOLOGY-Bird flu developments

04 Apr 2006 13:16:03 GMT

April 4 - The World Health Organisation (WHO) confirmed on Tuesday that that a 20-month Indonesian girl died from the H5N1 virus.

Bird flu re-emerged in December 2003 when South Korea confirmed a highly contagious strain of the virus at a chicken farm near Seoul. Here is a chronology of major bird flu developments in 2006:

Jan 18 - International donors pledge \$1.9 billion to combat the spread of bird flu at the end of a conference in Beijing.

Feb 8 - The first African cases of the deadly H5N1 strain are detected in poultry in the northern Nigerian states of Kano, Kaduna and Plateau.

Feb 11/12 - Italy says six wild swans found in Sicily and on the southern mainland have tested positive for H5N1. In Greece, three swans found south of Thessaloniki test positive for H5N1. These are the first known cases of the deadly strain in the EU.

Feb 14 - Iran and Austria report cases of H5N1.

Feb 15 - Germany confirms two dead swans found on the Baltic island of Ruegen were infected with H5N1. More than 100 wild birds have since tested positive for H5N1.

Feb 17 - Egypt finds its first cases of H5N1 in chickens.

Feb 18 - India announces its first cases of H5N1, finding the virus in poultry in a western state.

Feb 22 - The EU approves plans by France and the Netherlands to vaccinate millions of hens, ducks and geese against bird flu.

Feb 25 - France confirms H5N1 at a farm in the east where thousands of turkeys have died. It is the first case of the virus in domestic farm birds in the EU.

Feb 27 - Domestic ducks from Niger test positive for H5N1.

March 6 - Poland confirms two dead swans had H5N1.

March 16 - Afghanistan, Myanmar and Denmark confirm their first cases of H5N1 in birds. The next day Israel confirms its first cases.

March 21 - Pakistan becomes the latest country to confirm bird flu, with H5N1 reported in two poultry flocks at farms in the North West Frontier Province.

March 24 - Jordan confirms H5N1 after at least three dead turkeys at a domestic farm in Ajloun tested positive for the disease.

April 4 - WHO confirms death of a baby in Indonesia. The global toll stands at 108, with four victims in Turkey, 23 in Indonesia, five in Cambodia, 11 in China, 14 in Thailand, 42 in Vietnam, two in Iraq, five in Azerbaijan and two in Egypt.

-- Burkina Faso detects H5N1 in poultry near its capital Ouagadougou, making it the fifth African nation to report the disease after Nigeria, Niger, Egypt and Cameroon.

Source: Reuters

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Vaccine best way to counter bird flu, even if imperfect

RANDOLPH E. SCHMID

WASHINGTON — The most effective way to combat an outbreak of bird flu in people would require a rapid and aggressive vaccination campaign as soon as the outbreak began, even if the vaccine wasn't a perfect match, a study concludes.

Flu viruses are constantly changing, and a vaccine aimed at a specific strain can't be developed until scientists identify the form infecting humans. That's why the annual human flu shots must be updated every year.

But even a bird flu vaccine that is poorly matched to the form that breaks out would be likely to provide some protection and could help slow the spread of the disease, according to a research team headed by Timothy C. Germann of Los Alamos National Laboratory.

In addition to the vaccine campaign, the researchers said rapid use of several million doses of antiviral medicines such as Tamiflu could help stem an outbreak.

Their findings, developed by using computer models of how flu spread would be affected by vaccines, other medication and social steps such as closing schools and restricting travel, are published in this week's online edition of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The outbreak of H5N1 bird flu in Asia has now spread to Europe and scientists are concerned that it could become a worldwide pandemic if the virus changes in ways that enable it to spread easily from person to person.

More than 100 people have died from the virus, but most seem to have contracted the disease from domestic or wild fowl, with the illness slow to spread from one human to another.

If it develops that person-to-person ability and is not quickly contained at its source, "international travel could carry pandemic viruses around the globe within weeks to months ... causing a worldwide public health emergency," Mr. Germann's team warned.

Indeed, just last week Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's leading bird-flu scientist, said he was more worried about the virus arriving in a sick airline passenger than via migrating birds.

A vaccine for the bird flu is currently under development and early tests indicate it is effective in about 50 per cent of patients, though it requires a much larger dose than the regular annual flu shot. To date, the stockpile is enough for 4 million people with a goal of being able to protect at least 20 million people.

Targeting antiviral drugs to people in the area of flu cases is likely to be effective only during the earliest stages of an outbreak due to the labor-intensive requirements. As the flu spreads a community health system could be overwhelmed by the number of cases, the researchers said.

Because of the importance of children in transmitting the flu, school closures are likely in an effort to reduce exposure to the virus and either legal or voluntary travel restrictions could also occur, the study said.

However, the research team reported, their study indicated that even a 90 per cent reduction in domestic travel would slow the spread of the flu by only a few days to weeks and would not reduce the eventual size of the outbreak.

While the vaccine under development requires two doses to be effective, the researchers said the most effective response to an outbreak would be a rapid effort to deliver single doses as rapidly as possible, getting partial protection, possibly supplemented with antiviral drugs.

The spread of flu could potentially be controlled by delivery of 10 million doses of vaccine per week for 25 weeks, they concluded.

In a separate paper also being published online by PNAS researchers said that combining air travel and commercial shipping data with climate information could help indicate areas at risk of epidemics caused by the spread of disease-carrying mosquitoes.

In the report, Andrew Tatem of England's University of Oxford and colleagues analyzed more than 30,000 international ship and aircraft routes. They found the spread of the Asian tiger mosquito — which has not been linked to disease — followed high-traffic sea shipping routes.

Associated Press

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Burkina becomes 5th African state with bird flu

Tue Apr 4, 2006 11:27 AM GMT

OUAGADOUGOU (Reuters) - The highly pathogenic H5N1 bird flu strain has been found in poultry on the outskirts of Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou, the West African country's Livestock Minister Tiemoko Konate said.

The discovery makes impoverished, landlocked Burkina Faso Africa's fifth country with confirmed H5N1 outbreaks after Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Egypt.

Konate said in a televised announcement late on Monday that the bird flu strain had been confirmed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in samples taken from poultry at a motel on the eastern outskirts of Ouagadougou.

"Further to deaths noted in February among poultry and wild birds, 65 specimens from various regions of the country were sent to reference laboratories of the World Organisation for Animal Health and the Food and Agriculture Organisation," Konate said.

Source: Reuters

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Seventh case of bird flu in Czech Republic

2006-04-04 19:59:07

Prague, April 4 (Xinhua) - The seventh case of bird flu has been confirmed in the Czech Republic after tests proved that a swan found dead at the weekend was infected with the H5 virus.

Jan Duben, the spokesman for the State Veterinary Authority, said on Tuesday that the swan that died in Tyn nad Vltavou, South Bohemia, was killed by bird flu virus.

A 10-kilometre zone will be established around the spot and special measures will be applied. Tests are underway on the remaining dead birds in the region, Duben said.

All previous cases of bird flu in the country have been detected in South Bohemia.

The Prague national reference laboratory is carrying out tests on a further six swans, Duben said, adding that it could not be ruled out that new cases of bird flu might appear.

Under the adopted measures, the towns and villages in the affected area are to collect and dispose of the dead birds.

Local authorities are equipped with containers for the collection of the dead birds that will be disposed of by special veterinary institutes. These measures will last for at least 21 days, said the spokesman.

On March 27, the European Union Reference Laboratory in Weybridge, Britain, confirmed the first case of the dangerous H5N1 strain in a dead swan in the Czech Republic.

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