

Bird Flu News 5 – 6 April 2006

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Bird flu-hit farms to get 4% loan relief

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 05, 2006 12:59:45 AM

The central bank has announced some relief measures to those affected by culling of birds and falling poultry sales. All poultry units, which have been affected, will get a relief of 4% on their bank loans.

Announcing the first set of measures on Tuesday, RBI has asked banks to convert all outstanding loans and interests as on February `06 into term loans. These term loans have to be recovered in instalments based on projected future inflows for a period up to three years.

Banks have also been asked to give affected borrowers an interest holiday for the first year on loans. Although the circular has been issued to commercial banks, borrowers from rural co-operative banks and regional rural banks will also get the relief package as RBI has asked Nabard to issue similar instructions.

According to bankers, a widespread incidence of bird flu is the kind of operational risk that banks are expected to be prepared for under the new Basel II guidelines. The Basel II regulations require banks to set aside additional capital to meet requirements arising out of such events.

According to a report by the IMF, an epidemic outbreak of influenza caused by the H5N1 virus will cause economic disruptions on the supply side which will come directly from high absenteeism, as people maybe asked to stay at home, or may choose to do so to care for sick relatives or because of fear of being exposed themselves.

There may also be disruptions to transportation, trade, payment systems, and major utilities, exposing some enterprises to the risk of bankruptcy.

Moreover, the demand could contract sharply, with the consumer spending falling and investment being put on hold. Financial repercussions could further exacerbate economic risks. The report adds that an epidemic will also hit government finances as expenditure on health and public safety will surge, as governments implement WHO instructions.

Countries that are affected will also need to deploy security and police forces, distribute essentials, and meet heavy demands for health goods and services. Simultaneously, revenues will be hit as business and consumers put off purchases in the face of uncertainty, firms scale back production as employee attendance drops, and borders close.

Disruptions to the payment system may also result in less revenue flowing into national treasuries and absenteeism in government ministries may also disrupt government activity. Governments would also face demands for compensation from affected units.

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Myanmar continues to take preventive measures against bird flu

2006-04-05 11:00:13

YANGON, April 5 (Xinhua) -- Myanmar will continue to take preventive measures against bird flu although it claimed in last month-end that the disease has been under control, according to a reminder on avian influenza to the public of the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department published on Wednesday.

Five townships in Sagaing division and seven in Mandalay division, which were infected with bird flu, continued to be placed under restriction and movement control of animals, temporary closure of markets and disease investigation into poultry farms are being undertaken, the reminder said.

The five townships in Sagaing division include Shwebo, Khin U, Kanbalu, Ye U and Monywa, while the seven in Mandalay division comprise Pyigyidagun, Amarapura, Chanmyathazi, Chanayethazan, MahaAungmye, Aungmyethazan and Singaing.

Field investigation and disease surveillance are carried out continuously in cooperation with experts from international organizations, it said.

According to the reminder, since the outbreak of the avian influenza in early February this year up to April 2, 240,000 fowls and 230,000 quails of 307 poultry farms and 102 quail farms were culled. Altogether 90,000 chicken eggs and 60,000 quail eggs were also destroyed.

After the initial outbreak in these areas, investigation was made on 56 poultry farms with 460 samples being examined, of which 30 were detected with the H5N1 deadly virus, the reminder disclosed, adding that no evidence of human and other animal infections from the H5N1 was found.

To ensure normal flow of local chickens and poultry farming products and regular consumption and trading, arrangements are also being made to distribute such products to the customers with the endorsement of local LBVD, local reports said.

Meanwhile, as one of the preventive measures taken against probable spreading of the disease, chickens and ducks have also been banned in Naypyidaw city, Myanmar's new capital outside Pyinmana, since March 23 following the outbreak of bird flu in the two divisions.

Poultry farms in Naypyidaw, which is 300 kilometers south of Mandalay, are under examination by the authorities, local reports also said, adding that no H5N1 avian influenza has so far occurred there.

In the latest development, chickens and eggs from outside Yangon have also been banned from being transported into the city. However, free sale of chickens bred within Yangon is allowed, livestock breeding sources said.

In containing the bird flu outbreak, the country has so far received medical and lab equipment worth of more than 500,000 U.S.dollars from international organizations.

International organizations with which Myanmar cooperates in the fight include the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), National Animal

Health Laboratory of Australia, Livestock Breeding Development Department of Thailand, DLD and USAID. Enditem

Editor: Lu Hui (www.chinaview.cn)

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Bird flu kills 12-year-old in Cambodia

Wed Apr 5, 2006 10:09 AM BST

PHNOM PENH - Bird flu has killed a 12-year-old boy in Cambodia, the impoverished Southeast Asian nation's sixth victim, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Wednesday.

The boy, from the southeastern province of Prey Veng, abutting Vietnam, died on Tuesday night, said Michael O'Leary, the WHO representative in Phnom Penh.

Six Cambodians have died of bird flu since the H5N1 virus first emerged in Southeast Asia in late 2003. The 12-year-old's death is the second this year.

Reuters

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Bird Flu Found on German Farm With Ducks and Turkeys (Update1)

April 5, 2006



(Bloomberg) -- Germany detected its first case of bird flu in domestic poultry, marking the second time the disease has spread from wild populations to fowl destined for the food chain in the European Union.

Ducks and turkeys near Leipzig, the eastern state of Saxony, have tested positive for the H5 influenza virus, said Elke Reinking, the spokeswoman of the Federal Research Institute for Animal Health, in an interview today. The samples are now being tested for the H5N1 strain at the institute, she said.

"The veterinarian has already ordered the poultry to be culled," Reinking said. As many as 15,000 animals may be slaughtered, the news wire Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported, citing Saxony's Social Affairs Ministry.

The U.K. and Singapore are planning drills to test their preparedness for avian influenza outbreaks as the spread of the virus across Europe, Asia and Africa raises concern that the disease will become easily transmitted among people. Poultry prices may decline further as consumers shun meat and eggs. France reported an H5N1 infection on a turkey farm in February.

The presence of the virus in domestic poultry may raise the risk of human infection as people come into contact with birds during slaughtering, butchering, plucking feathers or in preparation for cooking. At least 108 of the 191 people known to be infected with the bird flu have died, according to the World Health Organization in Geneva.

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Singapore Plans July Drill to Test Bird-Flu Readiness (Update3)

April 5, 2006

(Bloomberg) -- Singapore plans to hold a two-day drill in July, simulating an outbreak of avian influenza, to test the readiness of its public hospitals, clinics and nursing homes.

The government is also distributing an information handbook to 1.1 million households and may close schools and impose other measures. Singapore has stockpiled 680,000 doses of Roche Holding AG's Tamiflu, an antiviral drug, the government said. By the end of the year, it will have 1.05 million Tamiflu doses.

"The government is making every effort to ensure that Singapore can cope with a flu pandemic," Lee Boon Yang, the country's information minister, said at a briefing today, adding that the drill "will involve the participation of the public and patients to test the work procedures and processes that have been worked out for crisis situations."

Singapore, which hasn't yet had a case of bird flu, is girding for an outbreak after the disease was found in Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, China, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iraq and Cambodia. The World Health Organization confirmed four human cases of avian influenza in Egypt over the past month, including two fatalities, the first time the agency found human infections in Africa.

Singapore was one of the five places most affected by the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS, three years ago. The disease killed about 33 in the city-state and at the height of the outbreak, tourist arrivals plunged to a two-decade low, forcing the government to shut schools and isolate more than 4,000 people.

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Egypt reports ninth human case of bird flu

05 Apr 2006 14:04:39 GMT

CAIRO, April 5 (Reuters) - Egypt has found its ninth case of human bird flu, a government minister said on Wednesday.

Health and Population Minister Hatem el-Gabali, quoted by the official MENA news agency, said the latest case was a girl aged 16 months from a province in southern Egypt. The deadly H5N1 strain has so far killed two Egyptians.

"This case was discovered on Tuesday and tests carried out ... showed that the case was positive," Gabali said, adding that she was in a stable condition after receiving treatment.

The government says nine Egyptians have now been infected by bird flu. The World Health Organisation has verified that four Egyptians have caught the deadly H5N1 strain, including the two who it killed.

Gabali said the girl, whose father raised birds in his home, started feeling unwell on Friday and was admitted on Sunday to a hospital. The family was being checked for infection.

The avian flu virus has so far not been transmitted from human to human, but can be caught from infected birds.

The government said on Sunday two sisters aged 18 months and six years were the most recent human cases of the virus.

The disease, which has killed at least 108 people worldwide, was first detected in birds in Egypt in February and has since devastated the poultry industry.

The government has banned domestic rearing of fowl. But many Egyptians are ignoring the ban because they are too poor to slaughter their birds.

Although difficult for humans to catch, scientists fear bird flu could mutate into a form that can pass easily between humans, causing a pandemic.

Source: Reuters

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Cats could fuel bird flu pandemic

06 Apr 2006



Cats are significantly more likely to catch and pass on bird flu than has generally been thought and could help the virus to mutate to cause a human pandemic, scientists said today.

The pets' role in the spread of the H5N1 virus, and the potential risk they pose to their owners, have been underestimated by public and animal health bodies, according to a team of leading virologists from the Netherlands.

Research at the Erasmus Medical Centre in Rotterdam has shown that the cats catch bird flu reasonably easily, either by close contact with infected birds or by eating them, and that they can transmit the virus to other cats.

This could give the H5N1 virus new opportunities to adapt to mammals, including humans, making the emergence of a pandemic strain that spreads easily from person to person more likely, the scientists said in the journal *Nature*.

By Mark Henderson Science Correspondent

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First case of bird flu confirmed in Scotland

April 06 2006



Bird flu was found in a dead swan in Scotland last night and further tests were being carried out to discover whether it is the deadly H5N1 strain. Preliminary tests had identified highly infectious H5 avian flu in a sample from a swan found in Cellardyke, Fife, making it the first case in Britain.

The H5 strain is contagious and can be fatal to birds. The deadly H5N1 strain can be fatal to humans if they come into close contact with birds. It is understood that the government's national emergency committee Cobra will meet today. Representatives from Defra, the Scottish Executive, the Department of Health, the Cabinet Office and 10 Downing Street are expected to attend.

James Withers, deputy chief executive of NFU Scotland, said the news was "extremely concerning".

"As we have watched the disease get closer we have waited for this day to come, but that doesn't make it any less worrying.

"It has been found in a wild bird and there is no evidence of it in the farmed population and the lessons from Europe are that it will not infect the farmed population."

In accordance with a recent EU decision, the Scottish Executive has put in place a protection zone of a minimum of three kilometres radius and a surveillance zone of 10 kilometres. If the disease is confirmed as the deadly H5N1 strain, there may be further restrictions. Last night, people in Cellardyke claimed the bird was found last week on a cobbled slipway in the harbour, which is still open to the public.

They also said that children had been seen playing near the dead bird.

WILLIAM TINNING - The Herald

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