Bird Flu News 10 – 16 January 2007

CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF CONFIRMED HUMAN CASES OF AVIAN INFLUENZA A/(H5N1) REPORTED TO WHO UP TO 15 JANUARY 2007 1

BIRD FLU MOVES CLOSER TO VIETNAM'S LARGEST CITY 1

INDONESIA: AVIAN INFLUENZA SITUATION - WHO UPDATE 2 2

INDONESIA: BIRD FLU INFECTS INDONESIAN TEENAGER CREATING NEW H5N1 CLUSTER 2

CULL BEGINS AT JAPANESE FARM HIT BY BIRD FLU 3

BIRD FLU SPREADING IN NORTHERN NIGERIA 4

BIRD FLU RE-EMERGES IN THAI FOWL, SPREADS IN SOUTHERN VIET NAM 5

BIRD FLU FLARES AGAIN IN ASIA 6

Cumulative Number of Confirmed Human Cases of Avian Influenza A/(H5N1) Reported to WHO up to 15 January 2007

Country	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		Total	
	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	D
Azerbaijan	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	5	0	0	8	5
Cambodia	0	0	0	0	4	4	2	2	0	0	6	6
China	1	1	0	0	8	5	13	8	0	0	22	14
Djibouti	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Egypt	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	10	0	0	18	10
Indonesia	0	0	0	0	19	12	56	46	4	3	79	61
Iraq	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	3	2
Thailand	0	0	17	12	5	2	3	3	0	0	25	17
Turkey	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	4	0	0	12	4
Viet Nam	3	3	29	20	61	19	0	0	0	0	93	42
Total	4	4	46	32	97	42	116	80	4	3	267	161

Total number of cases includes number of deaths.
WHO reports only laboratory-confirmed cases.

Bird flu moves closer to Vietnam's largest city

Date: 12 Jan 2007

HANOI, Jan 12 (Reuters) - Bird flu in poultry has moved closer to Vietnam's largest urban area of Ho Chi Minh City, a government report said, extending the spread of the H5N1 virus in southern provinces in recent weeks.

An Agriculture Ministry report issued late on Thursday said tests performed after 20 chickens were found dead on Sunday on a farm in Vinh Long province confirmed the presence of the virus.

The farm is 137 km (85 miles) southwest of the city of about eight million people.

Officials have confirmed outbreaks of the virus in ducks and chickens in four Mekong delta provinces further southwest of Ho Chi Minh City, where market inspectors have restricted the movement and selling of poultry.

Vietnam has had no human H5N1 cases since November 2005 but the virus that first struck the Southeast Asian country in late 2003 re-emerged last month in Mekong delta poultry.

Agriculture officials have warned the country's 84 million people that the virus could spread nationwide via migrating birds.

The risk of infections could also rise before the Tet Lunar New Year festival in mid-February, where the slaughter and eating of poultry is a traditional part of the new year's feast.

Bird flu killed 42 of the 93 people infected in Vietnam in 2003-2005.

It has killed 158 people globally since 2003, according to the World Health Organisation, spreading from Asia to Europe, the Middle East and Africa.
Source: Reuters

Indonesia: Avian influenza situation - WHO Update 2

Date: Fri 12 Jan 2007

As of Fri 12 Jan 2007, the Ministry of Health in Indonesia has confirmed the country's 59th death from H5N1 avian influenza. The 38-year-old woman from Tangerang, Banten Province whose infection was announced on 9 Jan 2007, died in hospital on 11 Jan 2007.

The Ministry of Health has also confirmed a new case of human infection with the H5N1 avian influenza virus. The 22-year-old woman from Banten Province developed symptoms on 3 Jan 2007 and remains in hospital. An initial investigation into the source of her exposure found reports of chicken deaths near her home in the days prior to symptom onset.

Of the 77 cases confirmed to date in Indonesia, 59 have been fatal.
Source: World Health Organisation (WHO), CSR, Disease Outbreak News

Indonesia: Bird Flu Infects Indonesian Teenager Creating New H5N1 Cluster

Date: Sun 14 Jan 2007

Bird flu infected an 18-year-old man in Indonesia, whose mother died of the disease 3 days ago, creating a new cluster of infections that doctors are monitoring for signs the virus is becoming more adept at infecting humans. The teenager from Tangerang, in Banten province, tested positive for the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, said Mukhtar Ikhsan, a doctor at Jakarta's Persahabatan hospital, which is treating the man and 7 other suspected cases, including the man's 42-year-old father.

"Results may be announced within a few days by the Health Ministry," Ikhsan said over the telephone today [14 Jan 2007]. Tests are pending on 6 others being treated in the hospital for suspected avian flu. Another 4 suspected cases are being treated in a hospital in Bandung city in West Java province.

Avian flu has killed 4 people in Indonesia since 10 Jan 2007, after a hiatus of almost 2 months (see part [1] & [2] above). World health officials say H5N1 may touch off a lethal pandemic capable of killing millions if it mutates to become as infectious to humans as seasonal flu. The H5N1 strain is known to have infected 265 people in 10 countries since 2003, killing 159 of them, the World Health Organization said on 12 Jan 2007. Indonesia has recorded at least 59 [61 as of 14 Jan 2007] fatalities, it said.

The Southeast Asian nation attracted international attention in May 2006 when 7 members of a family from the island of Sumatra contracted the H5N1 virus, 6 of them fatally. The cases represented the largest reported cluster of infections and the 1st laboratory-proven instance of human-to-human transmission.

Infections in birds and people are increasing, particularly in Asia, where the virus was 1st identified a decade ago. Hong Kong, Japan, Viet Nam, South Korea and Nigeria have reported diseased birds in the past month, while China and Egypt also found new human cases. Almost all human H5N1 cases have been linked to close contact with sick or dead birds, such as children playing with them or adults butchering them or plucking feathers.

A dead bird in Hong Kong's Shek Kip Mei area was found to have an H5 subtype of the avian flu virus, the city's 2nd reported infection in 2 weeks, a spokesman for Hong Kong's Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department said in a statement yesterday [13 Jan 2007]. More tests are being conducted on the bird, a crested goshawk found on 9 Jan 2007 on a hill behind a health center, the statement said. Shek Kip Mei is about 3 miles north of the Tsim Sha Tsui tourist district in the city's Kowloon peninsula. A dead wild bird, a scaly breasted munia, had been found previously in the shopping district of Causeway Bay on 31 Dec 2006 and tested positive for the H5N1 strain last week. "While we don't have a lot of information on this, I think it would be logical to suggest that it was infected in southern China," Peter Cordingley, a Manila-based spokesman for WHO, said in an 11 Jan 2007 interview. "We have to ask ourselves whether the virus is circulating unnoticed there."
Source: Bloomberg News Agency - By Aloysius Unditu

Cull begins at Japanese farm hit by bird flu

Date: Monday, Jan. 15, 2007

Agricultural authorities culled thousands of chickens Sunday at a poultry farm in Miyazaki Prefecture after test results found a pathogenic strain of the bird flu virus.

Workers in protective gear destroy chickens Sunday at a poultry farm in Kiyotake, Miyazaki Prefecture, that has been hit by bird flu. MIYAZAKI PREFECTURAL GOVERNMENT PHOTO/PHOTO

Some 4,000 chickens died at the farm in the town of Kiyotake starting last week. Officials said late Saturday that the virus belonged to the broad H5 family.

It was not yet clear whether the virus was the H5N1 strain that has killed dozens of people worldwide since 2003. But Miyazaki poultry official Keijiro Tarumizu said test results so far suggested that the virus was virulent enough for all the chickens at the farm to be destroyed.

On Sunday, about 150 workers sent by the prefectural government wearing masks, goggles and white protective suits to prevent secondary infection fatally gassed the farm's roughly 8,000 surviving birds and packed them in sealed bags for incineration on Monday.

After the chickens are removed, the entire farm will be disinfected Tuesday. If there are no signs of infection spreading after three weeks, the prefectural government plans to lift a ban on movements of chickens and eggs from 16 other farms within 10 km of the bird flu-hit facility, according to prefectural officials.

The 16 farms are expected to undergo inspections Wednesday and again a week later.

The H5 subtype is a highly pathogenic form of the virus among poultry but is not necessarily fatal to humans.

Since 2003, the H5N1 strain of the bird flu virus has claimed at least 157 lives worldwide, according to the World Health Organization.

Officials said they are running DNA tests to determine further details of the virus.

Bird flu remains difficult for humans to catch. However, international experts fear it may mutate into a form that could spread easily between humans and potentially kill millions around the world. So far, almost all human deaths from bird flu have been a result of direct contact with infected birds.
Source: The Japan Times - Compiled from AP, Kyodo

Bird flu spreading in northern Nigeria

Date: January 15th, 2007

Adiya Farm, Nigeria - The detection of the deadly H5N1 strain of avian influenza in Sokoto means the disease is or has been present in 17 of Nigeria's 36 states and in the Federal Capital Territory.

The officials sprayed chemicals to kill more than 21,000 chickens at Adiya farm, about 10 miles from the state capital, while labourers wearing no protective equipment dug a pit to bury the birds.

The first African country to be hit by bird flu, Nigeria has not reported any human cases of the disease although experts warn surveillance may not be completely effective and cases may have gone undetected.

"There was a lot of movement of people and poultry over the Christmas, New Year and Eid celebrations and that is what has caused this new outbreak," said Junaidu Maina, head of Nigeria's livestock department.

"We are on high alert because of that and we are also conducting active surveillance in the wetlands because of the presence of migrating birds."

Nigeria is one of three countries regarded by experts as the weakest areas in the global attempt to stem infections among birds and head off a potentially devastating human flu pandemic.

The disease was first discovered a year ago in the northern state of Kaduna and it spread rapidly to most parts of the country in the first week despite culling and quarantines.

The government announced soon after the initial outbreak that it would compensate farmers for culled birds, but the scheme appeared to get bogged down in red tape and newspapers have published numerous reports of farmers who were never paid.

Experts fear this may have discouraged farmers from reporting bird deaths and contributed to the spread of the disease.

Maina said the compensation mechanism was now working and all eligible farmers would receive their money by the end of next week.

Millions of Nigerians keep poultry in their backyards, making human-to-bird contact more common and surveillance more difficult. The majority of Nigeria's 140 million people live below the poverty line and cannot afford the luxury of rejecting sick or dead birds.

This has raised concern among experts that Africa's most populous nation is at risk of becoming a permanent host to the virus.

The H5N1 strain has killed 158 people out of a total of 264 infected since 2003, according to the World Health Organization. Scientists fear it will mutate so that it can pass easily from human to human.
Source: Reuters

Bird flu re-emerges in Thai fowl, spreads in southern Viet Nam

Date: January 16, 2007

Bird flu resurfaced in Thailand and spread to a 7th Vietnamese province in a fresh wave of poultry outbreaks in Asia. Officials in Egypt are testing a 20 year old woman suspected of being the country's 19th case.

The H5N1 strain of avian influenza killed ducks in a northern Thai province, the 1st outbreak reported in more than 5 months in the world's 4th-largest poultry-exporting country. The virus also infected ducks in Viet Nam's southern Soc Trang province, after re-emerging in fowl in Japan last week.

The new infections signal a resurgence of outbreaks similar to last year [2006], when the virus spread to more than 30 countries in the 1st quarter.

Infections in birds and people are increasing, particularly in Asia, where the virus was 1st identified a decade ago. Hong Kong, South Korea and Nigeria have reported diseased birds in the past month, while Indonesia, China and Egypt found new human cases.

A 20 year old woman is being treated for suspected avian flu at a hospital in Fayoum, south west of Cairo, the government-run newspaper Al-Ghomhuria reported, without citing a source for the information. A 23 year old woman died from virus in the same province, Al-Ghomhuria said. The WHO office in Cairo and Egypt's Health Ministry wouldn't confirm the report. The health ministry also found 4 poultry outbreaks in the delta governorate of Qaliyoubia, in northern Egypt, the newspaper said.

Thailand's Agricultural Ministry said about 2100 poultry were culled to contain an outbreak in the province of Phitsanulok, about 377 km (234 miles) north of the capital, Bangkok. Outbreaks in the South East Asian country last year [2006] killed 3 people in July and August.

Japan's agriculture minister Toshikatsu Matsuoka will return early from a visit to the United States to assist officials in containing an outbreak on the southern island of Kyushu, where 3900 chickens died of the disease and more than 8000 fowl were culled.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries plans to release a preliminary report of an investigation into the outbreak, which occurred on a farm in Miyazaki prefecture, vice minister Yoshio Kobayashi told reporters in Tokyo today [15 Jan 2007].
Source: Bloomberg News Agency [byline: Jason Gale and Karima Anjani]

Bird flu flares again in Asia

Date: January 16, 2007

JAKARTA (Reuters) - Indonesia prepared more hospitals to deal with bird flu cases and Japan confirmed a first outbreak of H5N1 in poultry in three years on Tuesday as the virus flared again in Asia, mirroring past winters.

Concern about the disease have rippled across the region, with an Indonesian hospital struggling to cope with suspected human cases this week, and the virus spreading among flocks in Vietnam and flaring again in Thailand.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said there were no signs of the virus spreading between humans and the response of most affected countries was much better than in the past.

"Obviously we are very concerned if this virus should develop the ability to transmit between humans. We have not seen any clear sign of that yet. We are hoping it will stay the way it is," Peter Cordingley, WHO spokesman for the Asia-Pacific, told Reuters Television in Manila.

The WHO says bird flu has infected 267 people in 10 countries and killed 161 since 2003. There are fears that millions could die if the virus were to mutate into a form that passes easily from person to person.

Four Indonesians have died already this year, taking the number killed by bird flu in the country to 61, the highest in the world.

In Geneva, the WHO's top bird flu expert said an unknown number of Muslims returning from the annual haj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia were treated in hospital in Indonesia for fever, a common symptom that could signal bird flu.

"The hospitals in Indonesia have been extremely overworked right now with people with fever. This is because pilgrims, as they return from the haj, if they do have a fever of any type, are hospitalised...in order for diagnostic testing to go on for a series of diseases," David Heymann, acting WHO assistant director-general for communicable diseases, told reporters.

"Avian influenza of course is one of them, but not the only one," he added.

FEARS OF A CLUSTER

Indonesia has struggled to contain the disease as millions of backyard chickens live in close proximity to humans and health education campaigns have often been patchy.

Nyoman Kandun, the Indonesian health ministry's director general of communicable disease control, said: "In the event of an escalation, more hospitals must be prepared. We are taking an inventory of what they need."

A doctor at Jakarta's Persahabatan hospital, one of two designated to treat bird flu cases in the capital, said it was overwhelmed with patients with bird flu symptoms.

Six children were discharged after tests found they did not have the virus, but three are still in hospital and another three with similar symptoms have been admitted, said Muchtar Ikhsan, head of Persahabatan's bird flu ward.

They include an 18-year-old man confirmed to have bird flu -- the country's fifth case this year -- and his father from Serpong in west Java, who has similar symptoms but has so far tested negative for the H5N1 virus.

The teenager's mother died of the disease last Thursday, raising fears of another possible cluster in Indonesia, where bird flu is endemic in around half of its 33 provinces.

A Japanese farm official said a bird flu outbreak at a poultry farm in southwestern Japan was due to the H5N1 strain.

There have been no reported cases of human infection or additional outbreaks in poultry in Japan. Almost 4,000 birds died from the disease at the affected farm, and authorities killed the remaining 8,000 chickens at the farm on Sunday.

H5N1 has spread across much of Asia, into Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Migrating birds and poultry smuggling are believed to be some of the ways the lethal virus has spread.

The WHO's Heymann said stronger measures to control the virus in poultry in many countries meant there was a lower risk of individual human infection from the H5N1 virus.

But he added that a pandemic risk would persist as long as the virus remained in circulation.
Source: Reuters - By Mita Valina Liem