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Cumulative Number of Confirmed Human Cases of Avian Influenza
12 May 2006

Country	2003		2004		2005		2006		Total	
	cases	deaths	cases	deaths	cases	deaths	cases	deaths	cases	deaths
Azerbaijan	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	5	8	5
Cambodia	0	0	0	0	4	4	2	2	6	6
China	0	0	0	0	8	5	10	7	18	12
Djibouti	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Egypt	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	5	13	5
Indonesia	0	0	0	0	17	11	16	14	33	25
Iraq	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2
Thailand	0	0	17	12	5	2	0	0	22	14
Turkey	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	4	12	4
Viet Nam	3	3	29	20	61	19	0	0	93	42
Total	3	3	46	32	95	41	61	37	205	113

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



East Africa reports first bird flu

May 12, 2006



THE tiny Red Sea state of Djibouti reported east Africa's first human case of the deadly H5N1 deadly bird flu strain, and said some chickens were also infected.

The health ministry said virology tests from samples of an infected person taken last month were positive for the virulent strain of the flu virus, which had also affected three domestic fowl.

"Tests from a person suffering from flu-like symptoms on April 27 were positive for the disease," the ministry said in a statement read on state radio. "Three domestic hens were also affected by the virus."

The ministry said the tests were carried out with the collaboration of the World Health Organisation (WHO) at a laboratory in Cairo, but did not give the condition or identity of the infected person.

But it said the person had been in direct contact with infected fowl, and called on the population to avoid proximity to live birds and report suspicious deaths of fowl.

By Nasser Fathmy in Djibouti

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French Researchers Develop Bird Flu Vaccine

11 May 2006

The avian influenza type A virus H5N1 has decimated poultry in parts of Asia, Africa and Europe, and caused severe illness and death in humans. On Thursday, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed the first case of bird flu in an infant girl in Djibouti in east Africa.

Djibouti is the second country in Africa after Egypt to have confirmed human cases of the disease. Eight countries have identified H5N1 in waterfowl.

So far, there's no evidence it has spread from human to human, even though that is seen by health authorities as a distinct possibility. Public health officials say human-to-human transmission could cause the virus to mutate rapidly, leading to a pandemic that could kill millions.

Researchers at France's Sanofi Pasteur Institute say they have developed a vaccine to produce neutralizing antibodies in humans and disarm the virus in infected individuals. They say they have created six versions of the serum, all involving an inactivated, modified strain of H5N1, and gave two doses of the drug to 300 healthy volunteers over a 42-day period.

According to the results of the study, which were published in the British medical journal *The Lancet* all six versions raised immunity in all of the volunteers. The researchers said the best results were produced by a vaccine that combined the inactive virus with a weak booster agent known as an adjuvant. Investigators say there were few side effects.

Study lead author Melanie Saville says the response investigators are getting in the lab is about as good as that of any seasonal flu vaccine.

"And at the moment, this is the best thing that we can do," she said. "As without any circulation of a pandemic strain, we can't see how efficacious a vaccine would be."



But observers caution that it's hard to predict how well the vaccine would work during a highly aggressive, flu pandemic.

Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health, says annual flu shots work because they have been circulating, in a slightly mutated form, within the human population for years. H5N1 is an entirely new strain that has jumped the species barrier from water fowl to humans, and Fauci says that's left scientists unprepared.

"Which tells us we have a long way to go before we optimize our approach to influenza," he said.

In the United States, an experimental bird flu vaccine yielded somewhat disappointing results. In a study published in March, researchers described how the compound stimulated protection in slightly over half of study participants receiving the highest doses.

But even so, observers say such moderately effective vaccines could be useful in limiting transmissibility, alleviating severe symptoms and limiting deaths from avian flu.

By Jessica Berman, VOA News

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Siblings of Djibouti bird flu case tested - WHO

Fri May 12, 2006 10:01 AM BST

GENEVA (Reuters) - A 2-year-old girl in Djibouti, the first confirmed human bird flu case in sub-Saharan Africa, was in stable condition on Friday while three siblings had tests for possible infection, the World Health Organisation said.

Djibouti Health Minister Abdallah Abdillahi Miguil said on Thursday in remarks broadcast on state television that the girl had tested positive for the H5N1 virus.

The WHO, a United Nations agency, has accepted as valid the results from the girl's sample tested by a U.S. laboratory based in Egypt, according to WHO spokeswoman Maria Cheng.

"Three of her siblings are undergoing investigation for possible infection. Their samples have been sent to the same laboratory," Cheng told Reuters in Geneva.

"They have flu-like symptoms," she said.

The family lives in a poor, rural area of the tiny country near the border with Somalia and kept chickens, Cheng said.

The minister said the virus had been detected in three birds. Cheng said laboratory results were awaited on the samples from the sick poultry. "There has not been a huge die-off of chickens," she added.

The WHO had sent supplies of the anti-viral Tamiflu, by Swiss drugmaker Roche, as well as personal protective equipment to try to prevent the spread of the deadly virus, Cheng said.

By Stephanie Nebehay

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Five Local Chinese Officials Fired for Mishandling Bird Flu Outbreak

12 May 2006

A woman and two geese in a remote rural area of Sichuan Province

Five local officials in southwest China have been fired for mishandling an outbreak of the H5N1 strain of bird flu late last year.



China's state-run media say the officials in Sichuan province's Dazhu county failed to investigate reports of poultry deaths at a farm last December. The H5N1 strain killed nearly 2,000 birds there. The Health Ministry announced the outbreak in January.

The province later reported three human bird flu cases, two of whom died. The third, an eight-year old girl, is recovering.

China has vowed to be more open in reporting cases of bird flu following international condemnation over its handling of an outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003. Chinese officials were accused of suppressing information about the outbreak.

SARS infected more than 8,000 people and killed almost 800, mostly in China, between late 2002 and mid-2003.

By VOA News

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Romania Culls More Than 2,000 Birds After Avian Flu Found

Today 5/13/2006 4:03:00 PM



BUCHAREST (AP)--Authorities began culling more than 2,000 birds in a village in the northwest Transylvanian region Saturday after dead birds in the community tested positive for bird flu, a government official said. The first dead birds from the village of Hurezu were discovered Tuesday, said Aurelian Danu, top government official for the county of Brasov, in a statement.

A total of 14 domestic fowl were diagnosed with bird flu, he said. Authorities will later disinfect the area, he added. Further tests will determine whether the birds have the deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu. There have been outbreaks of H5N1 in 53 communities since October, and authorities have culled more than 150,000 birds. This is the first outbreak of bird flu in Romania since the end of April and the first time bird flu has been detected in Transylvania.

Danu said health officials will make checks in abattoirs, markets and shops of chicken meat and eggs throughout the county to stop a potential spread of the disease. Romania reported its first cases of H5N1 in domestic fowl in October in its eastern Danube Delta region, which is crossed by hundreds of thousands of migratory birds. No human cases have been reported in the country.

The virus has spread from Asia to at least 10 European countries and Africa, and scientists fear it could mutate into a form that is easily transmitted between humans, sparking a pandemic. In some cases the virus has jumped to people, leading to at least 115 human deaths, according to the World Health Organization.

CattleNetwork.com

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Bird flu deaths in Indonesian family hit five

Monday, May 15, 2006

A fifth member of an Indonesian family has died of bird flu, according to a senior medical official. The five are part of a large family in Tanah Karo village on Sumatra island in which eight people are suspected to have contracted the virulent H5N1 bird flu virus.



Earlier tests have confirmed four members of the family died from the disease over the past week while new tests confirmed the fifth death was due to bird flu as well, said Nyoman Kandun, head of the Health Ministry's office of communicable disease control, Sunday.

He said doctors currently could not reveal the gender of the fifth fatality.

"We are still discussing this matter," he said.

He said samples from the patients have been sent to a World Health Organization -accredited lab in Hong Kong for confirmation.

"We are continuing to investigate this case," Kandun said. "We are trying to find the source of the virus."

He said a sixth family member, a 40-year-old woman, had also died but that samples had not been taken for laboratory tests.

"The person died earlier and has been buried," he said.

Asked whether doctors would try to obtain samples, Kandun declined to comment.

He said investigators were checking poultry near the village, since veterinarians had found no signs of bird flu among chickens and other animals in the village itself.

Indonesia's official human death toll from the H5N1 bird flu strain is 25 - the world's second-highest number after Vietnam.

Health officials closely study such groups of cases, known as "clusters," to see whether the virus, which currently is almost always transmitted from birds to humans, may have mutated into a form that can easily be passed between humans - a scenario that many fear could trigger a global human pandemic.

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Ivory Coast: Dancing away the bird flu blues

Web posted at: 5/15/2006 3:50:57

Days after bird flu was detected in Ivory Coast, hundreds of people were trembling, flapping their arms and clucking like hens. But there was no cause for alarm — the outbreak was confined to dance floors. The movements, which are now the talk of the town in the West African country, are the brainchild of a 21-year-old disc jockey DJ Lewis, who invented a dance making light of the deadly virus — by imitating a chicken in its death throes during a cull.

"When you kill the chicken this is how it dies," he shouts into the microphone as a Saturday night crowd rose from tables of green and brown beer bottles to watch him demonstrate the moves. Leaning backward and shaking his wrists, arms and legs to the beat of the music, he looks on the verge of collapse with his eyes half closed before he springs back to life with a loud clucking sound and starts all over again.

DJ Lewis says he's trying to fight fear of the disease by getting people to have a laugh about it. Worries about bird flu have turned Ivorians off poultry and boosted demand for snails, rabbit, antelope etc. The DJ said he was partly inspired by traditional Ivorian custom but is vague on how the dance mocking the death of a chicken can make people less scared of bird flu. "Witchdoctors would get everyone in the village to dance to chase out disease so I started to think about how my ancestors would deal with (bird flu)," said the 21-year-old prize-winning DJ who still eats chicken if he's "sure it's well cooked".

Source - REUTERS

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Bird flu-hit farmers demand aid package

MAY 14 – 2006

Having been badly hit by the impact of bird flu, poultry farmers in Goa have sought a rehabilitation package and revival measures from the State government for the losses suffered for more than two months.

The poultry farmers under the banner of National Egg Co-ordination Committee, Goa, some of whom are still reeling under the impact of bird flu that hit Navapur, Maharashtra on February 18 this year, have submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister Pratapsing Rane urging him to come up with a package on the lines announced by the neighbouring States – Maharashtra and Karnataka.

The delegation led by chairman of NECC Philip Valadares tried to impress upon the chief minister that some supportive measures be adopted by the government to enable poultry farmers to recover from the crisis.

NECC has suggested that eggs should be included in the diet for children under the Mid-day Meal scheme at the rate of at least 2-3 eggs per week. Eggs, besides chicken he said, are the cheapest available source of protein.

Karnataka government has announced a relief package of Rs 35 crore while Maharashtra's is much higher, NECC said pointing to the poor sales of poultry products for nearly two months. More than 1000 workers suffered directly and indirectly after poultry operations were crippled due the Avian Influenza reports.

Things have improved in Goa from the sales point of view, Valadares said adding that people are back to eating chicken and eggs as production too has picked up well. Consequently, the price of eggs and broilers has now gone up.

However, many of the smaller producers of poultry products are in bad position. They suffered as there was no demand for their products, had to buy feed to keep the birds going, pay for the labour, electricity, water, etc.

In view of this, Valadares urged the banks to reduce the loan interest rates further. Some banks have already started slashing interest rates but all are not doing so, he complained. Cash-credit should also be turned into term loans and fresh cash-credit should be extended to the farmers, he demanded.

Valadares said the chief minister and Minister for Animal Husbandry Micky Pacheco have sympathized with the farmers and hoped that the government would come out with a relief and rehabilitation package.

BY HERALD REPORTER

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IBM to help track spread of bird flu

Mon, May. 15, 2006



IBM today is announcing a new cooperative effort with health authorities to stem the spread of bird flu and other infectious diseases using technology it developed partly at its Almaden Research Center in San Jose.

As part of the effort, IBM said it will donate software designed to enable health authorities to share data, track the geographic spread of diseases and predict how the bird flu virus might mutate into a form that is deadlier to people.

Giving health experts in different countries the ability to share computer and other data would be a major achievement, said David Spellmeyer, an IBM researcher in San Jose who is involved in the project. He said he doesn't know of any health agency in the world that can share all of its records with other agencies.

“That's what we're all working toward,” Spellmeyer said.



Participants in the so-called Global Pandemic Initiative include the World Health Organization, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and businesses and universities, IBM said.

Dr. Richard Waldhorn, an analyst at Pittsburgh University's Center for Biosecurity, who also is participating in the effort, agreed health authorities could use IBM's help.

"One of the big problems we face in preparation for an epidemic is institutional awareness," he said. "How can you communicate with people in the field so you can collate this information together and get some picture of what's going on? The World Health Organization is really a terrific organization, but they are way overburdened."

One of the software components IBM will donate, dubbed the Interoperable Health Information Infrastructure, was developed at the Almaden Research Center in conjunction with IBM scientists elsewhere. It is designed to help hospitals, laboratories and public health agencies share data.

Another software contribution, also developed largely at Almaden, is the so-called Spatiotemporal Epidemiological Modeler, or STEM, which can create computer models of how a disease spreads geographically.

Although both products already are on the market, IBM's Spellmeyer said the company's researchers in San Jose and elsewhere will update the software with new data as bird flu or other infectious diseases evolve.

IBM scientists in New York also are working with the La Jolla-based Scripps Research Institute to create computer technology that can predict how bird flu might mutate and become more lethal to people. IBM officials said those predictions could help in the development of effective bird-flu vaccines.

By Steve Johnson, Mercury News

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Pacific countries on risk of bird flu

May 15, 2006



Some small countries in the Pacific region may get infected with bird flu, as the disease had contaminated poultry in Indonesia's Papua Province, which was bordered with Papua New Guinea, an UN official said here on Monday.

Papua New Guinea was currently on threat of being contracted by the virus, said Laurence J. Gleesen, Regional Manager of Emergency Center for Transboundary Disease Control of the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).

"If they arrived into Papua New Guinea and I think other nations in the South Pacific would also be at risk. I don't mean Australia. I mean some of the small nations, because there are

rapid movement of people and other products," Gleesen told reporters on the sideline of the 28th Regional Conference of FAO for Asia and the Pacific Region which kicked off here on Monday morning.

It was last month when the Papua poultry were contracted with H5N1 virus, according to the official.

"We know that this disease has recently arrived in the province of Papua. It was certainly moved by the poultry and the poultry products, so the spread of the disease is clearly a threat to Papua New Guinea," he said.



Twenty six out of 35 people infected by the disease in Indonesia have died, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Last week, five Indonesian people from a blood-related family were infected with avian influenza virus according to test by the country's laboratory. Three of them have died.

Source: Xinhua

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