

Bird Flu News 24 – 26 April 2006

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Bird flu confirmed at two more farms in Islamabad

Monday, April 24, 2006

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Food and Livestock confirmed the deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu in two more poultry farms in Islamabad on Sunday.

"Bird flu has been confirmed in two poultry farms in Sihala and Tarlai after a careful examination of the birds' samples," said Poultry Research Institute Assistant Director Muhammad Amjad.

Earlier, the ministry culled 10,000 fowls in the same poultry farms. The farms were sealed and district health authorities took poultry workers' blood samples. The National Institute of Health (NIH) will test the samples and workers found to have developed bird flu-like symptoms will be admitted to the isolation ward at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences.

Amjad said that district government officials were surveying areas adjacent to Islamabad for more infected farms. He admitted that the virus was spreading.

Recently, two poultry farms near the capital were sealed after bird flu had been confirmed there. Authorities culled around 25,000 fowls.

Muhammad Naveed, a poultry trader in Dhoke Khabba, was admitted to the isolation ward of Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH) with bird flu-like symptoms, hospital sources said. "Doctors took his blood sample and have sent it to the NIH for further tests," they said. Naveed's test results were expected on Sunday, but NIH officials said the final report might take another day.

Dr Birjees, a senior NIH official, said the institute had received around 50 blood samples from suspected patients after the recent scare. "NIH laboratories have found no strain of bird flu in 80 percent of the samples received," he said. The remaining results will be finalised soon, he added.

The NIH has also launched a door-to-door campaign in affected areas to stop an epidemic from occurring, said Birjees. The NIH teams check patients with symptoms of bird flu and recommend appropriate action, he added.

PIMS hospital received nine patients, but none of them tested positive for bird flu. The hospital has already discharged six of them.

H5 and other low-pathogenic forms of bird flu cause mild symptoms such as ruffled feathers and a drop in egg production. The H5N1 strain has spread across Asia and into parts of the Middle East, Africa and



Europe since 2003 and 110 people are confirmed to have died. Authorities here slaughtered 25,000 birds and sealed off the affected farms in Charsadda and Abbottabad.

No human cases have yet been reported despite a number of scare stories in the local media and rising apprehension here. Only 194 people are known to have been infected so far worldwide and 109 have died. However, scientists say millions of people could be infected in a human pandemic but with a much lower mortality rate.

- By Shahzad Raza, Daily Times

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African leaders brainstorm on bird flu

April 24 2006 at 03:37AM

Blantyre - Veterinary and wildlife experts from 19 African countries on Monday begin a five-day meeting in Malawi to discuss better surveillance against bird flu, which has hit five countries on the continent.

"The bird flu pandemic poses a devastating effect to millions of people in Africa who depend heavily on poultry for both income and food," Mazlan Jusoh, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) country representative in Malawi, said in a statement issued on Sunday.

"The FAO reiterates the urgent need to increase surveillance and early detection of bird flu to mitigate an outbreak," he said, ahead of the meeting in the capital Lilongwe.

"In Malawi as is the case in many African countries, inadequate medical, veterinary and laboratory services, limited animal and human health education and the high levels of poverty make more people vulnerable," he said.

Jusoh said that alongside surveillance, countries must "step up public awareness campaigns and put in place rapid response mechanisms to reduce socio-economic impact of the disease".

In February, Africa's most populous country, Nigeria, reported the first cases in Africa, followed by Egypt, Niger and Cameroon. This month, Sudan confirmed the presence of the virus in poultry in Khartoum.

Experts attending the conference will come from Botswana, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Avian influenza is a contagious disease, which mostly affects birds but it can occasionally infect humans.

The highly pathogenic form, the H5N1 strain, spreads very rapidly through poultry flocks and has a mortality that can approach 100 percent within 48 hours.

The H5N1 virus has struck poultry flocks in dozens of countries and claimed more than a hundred human lives.

Experts fear that it could mutate into a form that can be transmitted from human to human, creating a risk of a pandemic that could kill millions of people.

- Sapa-AFP

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World Bank makes \$34.4 mln bird flu loan to Turkey

Mon Apr 24, 2006 7:44 PM ET

WASHINGTON, April 24 - The World Bank approved a \$34.4 million loan on Monday to help Turkey combat avian flu in birds and humans, the bank said in a statement.

The loan, drawn from \$500 million credit line the World Bank approved in January for countries needing help fighting bird flu, will support prevention, preparedness and planning as well as response and containment of the disease, it said.

Four children died of the H5N1 strain of avian flu in eastern Turkey in January, the first human fatalities outside east Asia.

The H5N1 avian flu virus has spread quickly in recent months, and has been reported in more than 40 countries across Asia, Europe and parts of Africa.

The disease has killed 110 people and infected 196 since 2003. It remains primarily an animal disease, but experts say the virus could acquire the ability to pass rapidly from human to human and could kill millions of people in a pandemic.

In January, the World Bank estimated that a global response to bird flu would cost between \$1.2 billion and \$1.4 billion. The bank estimates that an avian flu pandemic lasting a year could cost the global economy as much as \$800 billion.

- Reuters

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EU clears bird flu aid for farmers

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2006

LUXEMBOURG EU governments approved special subsidies Tuesday for poultry farmers who suffer losses as the spread of bird flu scares consumers away from chicken, turkey and other poultry.

Under the plan, farmers who can prove financial damage due to falling demand can qualify for national subsidies, half of which would be funded by the European Commission if it finds that such payments are justified and help reduce output.

Some 320,000 tons of poultry meat that cannot be sold lies in cold storage across the 25-nation EU. On average, prices have fallen by 13 percent. Consumption is down by 5 percent in Denmark and Finland, but by as much as 40 percent in Cyprus, 50 percent in Italy and 70 percent in Greece. Drops in prices range from only 0.3 percent in Austria to 63 percent in Italy, according to EU data.

Italy and France have emergency funding of €100 million, or \$124 million, and €52 million, respectively, but only France has spent some money and may apply for EU funding retroactively, an EU spokesman, Michael Mann, said.

The EU agriculture commissioner, Mariann Fischer Boel, said the measure, which is supported by the European Parliament, would take effect in a matter of days and the first payments could be approved in a few weeks.

Officials could not say how much money would be coming from the EU budget, saying that would depend on the nature of the subsidies national governments propose.

"The most sensible approach would be to compensate farmers for measures which temporarily reduce production," Fischer Boel said, serving notice that she would reject requests for subsidies that allowed farmers to continue to produce meat and eggs that were then simply put into storage.

Worldwide, at least 113 people have died of bird flu. Though most contracted it after close contact with sick birds, scientists are concerned that H5N1 could mutate into a virus that is easily transmitted between people and cause a pandemic.

Germany, which has 70,000 tons of poultry products in storage, estimates that its sector has suffered damage of around €150 million due to falling demand and the cost of culling birds.

In France - which has surplus stocks of 40,000 tons - the poultry sector estimates it loses €40 million a month.

- The Associated Press

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Bali ducks test positive for bird flu

Wed 26 Apr 2006

DENPASAR, Indonesia (Reuters) - Hundreds of ducks have been culled on Indonesia's Bali island after samples tested positive for the H5N1 bird flu virus, a senior veterinarian said on Wednesday.

The birds were culled in Gianyar regency on the popular tourist island and came from a farm and its surrounding areas.

"We burnt 432 ducks yesterday, 392 of them came from that farm while the rest were owned by surrounding residents," Dewa Nyoman Raka Jaya, head of Gianyar's animal husbandry office, said by phone from the central Bali town.

"We assumed that all of them had the bird flu virus because all of the samples were positive."

"Today, we are chasing chickens around the farm. We don't know how many but we will burn them tonight," Jaya said.

Indonesia has the second highest bird flu human death toll of any country. But the government has resisted mass culling of birds, citing the expense and impracticality in a country where keeping a few chickens or ducks in the backyards is common.

Culling at selective farms and their immediate surroundings has been the preferred method.

In Indonesia, the H5N1 virus has been reported in birds in most of the country's 33 provinces, and there have been previous cullings in Bali. No human cases have been reported on the island.

The World Health Organisation has confirmed 24 human deaths in Indonesia from the virus from a total 32 confirmed cases, the majority in and around the capital Jakarta.

A sweeping door-to-door campaign to try to control the disease in the capital, home to 12 million people, only got underway at the end of February.

- Reuters

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Deadly strain of bird flu confirmed in all 12 Czech cases

26-Apr-2006 22:14 hrs

Firemen wearing protective gear on the boat carry out a dead bird at Podhradsky pond in the city of Hluboka nad Vltavou some 160km south of Prague, in March 2006. The Czech Republic's national veterinary services confirmed that all 12 cases of bird flu detected in the country in the past month were the H5N1 strain which can be deadly to humans.

The Czech Republic's national veterinary services confirmed that all 12 cases of bird flu detected in the country in the past month were the H5N1 strain which can be deadly to humans.

Josef Duben, the veterinary spokesman, said the European Union's specialist laboratory for bird flu in Weybridge, England, had confirmed the presence of the highly pathogenic strain in samples from the 12 dead wild swans.

The dead birds have all been found within a relatively narrow swathe of land in the Bohemian region, about 150 kilometers (roughly 100 miles) south of the capital Prague.

"Everything suggests that this was an isolated group of sick swans. The tests at Weybridge showed that this was the same strain that was detected in Austria and Germany," he said.

The Czech Republic put in place a series of measures against bird flu following the discovery of the virus in all its neighbors -- Poland, Austria, Germany and Slovakia.

A security zone was also set up on March 28 around the site where the first infected swan was discovered on Czech territory on March 20.

"The protective measures, unchanged, are still in place," he said.

The country was the 13th EU member state to have confirmed the presence of the H5N1 strain, which has killed more than 100 people worldwide through contact with infected poultry.

No Czech poultry has been infected, the veterinary service spokesman said, adding that 2,300 wild birds and domestic fowl had been examined already.

More precisely, 2,038 wild birds, 246 poultry and four parakeets," Duben added.

The Czech Republic, which has a population of 10.2 million, counts some 700 industrial poultry farms and hundreds of thousands of backyard coops.

Duben said that, based on the experience of other regions, the number of dead wild birds found to be infected with avian flu will diminish during the spring and summer. — AFP

The Czech Republic's national veterinary services confirmed that all 12 cases of bird flu detected in the country in the past month were the H5N1 strain which can be deadly to humans.

- MediaCorp Press Ltd

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