



Bird Flu News 27 Oct. – 03 Nov. 2006

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Cumulative Number of Confirmed Human Cases of Avian Influenza

31 October 2006

Country	2003		2004		2005		2006		Total	
	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	D
Azerbaijan	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	5	8	5
Cambodia	0	0	0	0	4	4	2	2	6	6
China	1	1	0	0	8	5	12	8	21	14
Djibouti	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Egypt	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	7	15	7
Indonesia	0	0	0	0	19	12	53	43	72	55
Iraq	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	3	2
Thailand	0	0	17	12	5	2	3	3	25	17
Turkey	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	4	12	4
Viet Nam	3	3	29	20	61	19	0	0	93	42
Total	4	4	46	32	97	42	109	74	256	152

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

Avian influenza – situation in Egypt – update 10

The Ministry of Health in Egypt has confirmed the country's seventh death from H5N1 avian influenza. The 39-year-old woman, whose infection was confirmed on 11 October, died on 30 October.

The patient was a 39-year-old woman from the Gharbiya governorate in the Nile Delta. She developed symptoms on 30 September and was hospitalized on 4 October. She subsequently developed pneumonia.

Previous human cases occurred from late March 2006 through May. To date, the country has reported 15 cases, of which 6 were fatal.

Source: World Health Organization



Sparrows in China carry bird flu virus

2006-10-26 19:29:57



Chinese scientists recently reported that they found H5N1 bird flu virus in sparrows two years ago, the first time the virus has been detected in the common, non-migratory bird on the Chinese mainland.

Wuhan Institute of Virology in central China's Hubei Province tested excrement samples from 38 sparrows after an outbreak of bird flu in a county in Henan Province in 2004. Some of samples tested positive of H5N1 virus, said Li Tianxian, a researcher with the institute.

"There's no need for the public to panic. The findings are two years old and there is no indication that sparrows pose a risk," Li told Xinhua, adding that scientists found the bird flu virus in sparrows in the region of Hong Kong in 2002 and also in Turkey and South Africa.

Working with the Beijing Institute of Zoology, under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the scientists isolated four H5N1 strains among the 25 positive excrement samples.

Li said tests on the four strains have shown they are a new genotype of H5N1, adding that researchers did not find dead sparrows.

It was thought that bird flu was mainly transmitted by migratory water fowl, but this finding proves that non-migratory birds are also a potential channel for bird flu transmission, she told the Chutian Metropolitan News published in Hubei Province.

The finding was published in December of last year in the U.S-based Journal of Virology, according to the newspaper.

Recent outbreaks of bird flu have again put the nation on alert for the potentially deadly disease.

In late September and early October, China reported two new outbreaks of bird flu in poultry, which killed at least 2,000 domestic fowl in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

The quarantine imposed on Jiuyuan District of Baotou city of Inner Mongolia where the outbreak occurred was lifted on Wednesday.

Yin Chengjie, Vice-Minister of Agriculture, has warned that autumn and winter were critical periods, urging officials to be aware of the dangers of bird flu and not underestimate the difficulty of controlling it.

Zeng Guang, an expert with China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention has also warned of the possibility of a major bird flu outbreak in China this winter or next spring, saying that such an outbreak would probably take place as common flu cases reach their peak.

It remains difficult to determine how the H5N1 virus will develop, Zeng was quoted by the China Daily as saying, but noted there was a possibility it may form a hybrid with other flu viruses.

The Health Ministry last month required doctors and grass-roots health organizations to report infectious diseases within two hours of detection, including any outbreak of SARS, poliomyelitis and bird flu. Beijing has reinstated daily reporting of bird flu monitoring results as well.



The health ministry has also required all medical institutes to give intensive training by the end of November to medical professionals on the awareness of laws and regulations and prevention and control measures of infectious disease including bird flu, SARS, and pneumonia of unknown causes.

The Chinese government has prepared 23 million to 25 million doses of flu vaccine this year, 20 percent more than last year.

China has reported 21 human infections of bird flu since 2003, that have caused 14 deaths. Globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) has recorded 256 human infections including 151 deaths as of Oct. 16.

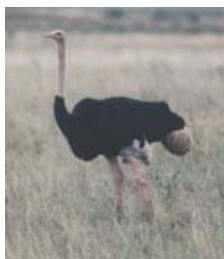
So far, all human cases of bird flu were transmitted by sick or dead birds. WHO reports there is still no evidence to suggest human-to-human transmission of the disease has occurred.

- Source: Xinhua - China

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Bird flu suspected in Zimbabwean ostriches

27 Oct 2006



Two ostriches at a farm in Hwange, Matabeleland North, Zimbabwe, are suspected to have contracted a strain of the dangerous bird flu virus. This is the second such case in the country in recent weeks.

Zimbabwean Department of Veterinary Services director, Stuart Hargreaves, could not confirm the bird flu outbreak; however, he could not rule it out. Hargreaves stated that there were similar cases in Victoria Falls and Livingstone, Zambia, where birds have been quarantined.

Farmers, who had identified such symptoms on quarantined ostriches in Zambia during the recent outbreak, have reported the case to the veterinary department who promises to carry out tests to establish what it is.

Hargreaves downplayed the fears, saying the department has intensified efforts to prevent a deadly outbreak, stating that the situation is being monitored and regional exports of ostrich meat, chicken and eggs has been resumed.

- Source: worldpoultry.net

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AVI antisense drug battles bird flu

Oct. 27, 2006



U.S. firm AVI BioPharma says pre-clinical data show antisense drug Neugene beats multiple strains of Influenza A, including bird flu.

In the study, eight Neugene antisense drugs were evaluated for their ability to inhibit influenza A virus by blocking the complementary RNA sequences that are highly conserved across viral subtypes, the company said.

AVI said a number of the agents were "highly efficacious, each reducing viral titer in a dose-responsive and sequence-specific manner." But of the eight Neugene agents tested, two worked especially well in



subduing the influenza A virus, including strains H1N1, H3N2, H3N8, H7N7 and most importantly, the deadly H5N1 avian virus, or bird flu.

"This latest publication is further evidence that Neugene drugs offer a broad-spectrum therapeutic approach to treating a high percentage of known influenza viral strains," said Patrick Iversen, senior vice president of research and development at AVI. "Two of the Neugene drugs used in these studies have now moved into preclinical animal studies against both seasonal and avian influenza strains."

- Source: *United Press International*

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Thailand mulls plan to set up bird flu vaccine factory

Oct 28, 2006

In a bid to keep Thailand well-prepared for possible recurrence of another outbreak of bird flu, Thailand will study the possibility to set up a factory to produce avian influenza or bird flu vaccine.

Public Health Minister Dr. Mongkol Na Songkhla stressed that it was necessary for Thailand to set up a factory to manufacture the vaccine.

He said a team of academics and experts will look into pros and cons of the plan. The results of the study will be submitted for the Cabinet's consideration before making a final decision.

Dr. Mongkol said that he had assigned a team of experts in the public health ministry to collect updated information about the deadly air-borne communicable disease. After receiving all information available, he would hold a talk with the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives on the necessity of establishing a factory to produce vaccine to fight the bird flu in both humans and animals.

Vaccine may be necessary, he explained, because the virus causing the disease can mutate rapidly. Budget might not be a problem because this project is involved with human life and safety, according to the minister, so it is likely the government would make it a priority.

Official statistics show that three new cases of bird flu were reported this year and that all three victims succumbed to the contagious disease, bringing the death toll in the kingdom from the deadly virus to 17 since the bird flu outbreak began here in 2004. (INA)

- Source: *Thai News Agency MCOT - Bangkok, Thailand*

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India: Tamiflu helped avert outbreak of bird flu

30 Oct 2006



Via the Times of India: Tamiflu helped avert outbreak of bird flu. Excerpt:

The deadly H5N1 bird flu virus that hit India in February 2006 was sensitive to Tamiflu, the drug which many governments including India used to ward off a deadly bird flu pandemic.

Genetic and DNA sequencing of the virus collected from Jalgaon and Navapur by scientists from Bhopal's High Security Animal Disease Laboratory, has revealed that the virus contained several types of amino acids - glutamic acid, asparagine, histidine and arvinone - that made it sensitive to Tamiflu.



This, scientists say, helped India avert a possible transmission of the deadly H5N1 virus from birds to humans.

Scientists B Patnaik and C Tosh, who have completed sequencing the genes HA1 and HA2 of the virus and studying the 10 proteins, specially HA and NA present in the virus, told TOI that "timely administering of Tamiflu to those who were quarantined on suspicions of having been in contact with H5N1 virus infected birds, helped us avert the transmission of the virus to humans. DNA analysis of the virus has shown it to be highly sensitive to Tamiflu".

- Source: Times of India - India

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Stockpiling Glaxo's Bird Flu Vaccine In UK

30 Oct 2006



UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and Chancellor, Gordon Brown, had talks with J. P. Garnier, Glaxo's CEO, about building up a stockpile of H5N1 bird flu vaccines. Glaxo has signed a deal with Singapore, according to The Times (UK). Switzerland has ordered 8 million doses, the order provides enough doses for one per head of the entire Swiss population. Click here to read about the Swiss order.

Andrew Witty, President Pharmaceuticals Europe, GlaxoSmithKline, said: "This (Swiss contract) is the first major contract that GSK has signed for its candidate H5N1 vaccine. The Swiss Government have adopted a comprehensive strategy to help protect their population. Our vaccine, which has already demonstrated strong immunogenicity at the lowest dose seen with a split cell vaccine, provides an attractive option for Governments currently considering how best to combat the threat of a flu pandemic. We continue to work with Governments across Europe on their pandemic plans and are on track to file our adjuvanted H5N1 vaccine with the European regulators by the end of 2006."

Apparently, Glaxo has also been in talks with US and French authorities.

All three nations, USA, UK and France are looking at the possibility of carrying out mass vaccination programs.

The Glaxo vaccine is supposed to offer humans protection from the H5N1 bird flu strain. The company expects to submit its vaccine for approval with the European Medicines Agency at the end of this year. Even though the vaccine has been shown to offer some protection against H5N1, nobody really knows how effective it would be against a new, mutant strain.

- Source: Written by: Christian Nordqvist, Editor: Medical News Today

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Bird flu test kit clinches top Asian Innovation Award

31 October 2006

SINGAPORE: More than a thousand guests turned up at the Global Entrepolis@Singapore 2006 gala dinner on Tuesday evening, where Veredus Laboratories struck gold at the annual Asian Innovation Awards.

The company came up with a faster test kit for the deadly bird flu virus.



Instead of waiting for five days or more before testing for the virus, it looks for other clues to fight the disease and prevent it from spreading.

The winners were chosen from more than 200 contenders in 14 countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region.

Over 10,000 participants from more than 60 countries are attending this year's Global Entrepolis@Singapore, which will be on till Thursday. - CNA/so

- Source: *By Farah Abdul Rahim, Channel News Asia - Singapore*

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British scientists create new bird flu map

Wednesday 01 November 2006

AS THE late autumn migrations of millions of birds to Europe begins to gather pace, bringing with it new fears about the spread of deadly avian 'flu, British scientists announced today (November 1) that they have created a new map of migration patterns which could act as an early warning system should the disease threaten Britain.

Migrating birds from South East Asia and the southern steppes were last year accused of bringing the deadly strain of H5N1 strain which has killed humans in Asia to Europe, but there were no reported cases of the infection spreading to people here.

However, warning bells rang because epidemiologists fear that the H5N1 strain to crossbreed with human flu strains and produce a killer strain against which there are no effective vaccines.

Scientists from the rural affairs department Defra turned for help to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), which has some 650,000 movements on its data base of birds ringed by hundreds of volunteers. And working together for the past year, they have now come up with an early warning computer model which, the experts hope, will allow them to predict the arrival of infected birds in Britain.

Announcing the creation of the new technology today, Dr Phil Atkinson, who took the lead in the research, commented: "We were pleased that Defra recognised that we have excellent data about the movements of birds due to the huge efforts of bird ringers, working as part of the BTO's ringing scheme.

"We have used this information to develop a 'migration mapping tool' to give an easy to understand picture of the timing of migration and the areas from which migratory waterfowl that visit Britain and Ireland originate, or through which they travel.

"We can now provide much better information to Defra to help them target their surveillance for a potential avian flu incursion, given an outbreak of the disease in another country."

- Source: *Daelnet - Yorkshire Dales, UK*

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WHO warns of bird flu confusion in China

3-Nov-2006

A chicken farmer checks her fowl at a farm on the outskirts of Huhhot the capital of China's Inner Mongolia region in October 2005. China's lack of transparency over its handling of bird flu is making it difficult to determine if the deadly virus is mutating and spreading, a leading World Health Organization official has said.



China's lack of transparency over its handling of bird flu is making it difficult to determine if the deadly virus is mutating and spreading, a leading World Health Organization official has said.

"The situation in China is quite confusing and there is some conflicting information," Julie Hall, the WHO's coordinator of epidemic alert and response in China, told AFP Friday.

"We really don't know how many strains of bird flu there are in China because we have limited amounts of information shared with us by the Ministry of Agriculture and the virus samples we have asked for have not been shared."

Hall was speaking after China rejected on Thursday claims by scientists in Hong Kong and the United States that a new strain of the virus -- dubbed the "Fujian-like" strain -- had emerged and was having an impact in southern China.

China's Ministry of Agriculture said the findings, contained in a report in an American academic publication, "did not completely conform with facts."

The ministry said the strain of the bird flu in southern China was consistent with earlier strains.

"The researchers are not saying that a new (strain) of the virus was emerging, they are saying that one particular strain has become dominant," Hall said, when asked to comment on China's reaction to the scientists' report.

Virus are always mutating and changing with every new generation and new strains and substrains are always appearing, but what was crucial was to try to understand which strains were becoming dominant, Hall said.

A dominant strain of the bird flu virus could be an indication that it was becoming resistant to vaccines given to poultry. China vaccinated up to 8.2 billion poultry from January to September this year.

"Right now, there is not enough data to make a firm conclusion... but this is what the data is indicating," Hall said.

The WHO would like to see the "hundreds, if not thousands of (bird flu) gene sequences" uploaded by the Ministry of Agriculture on a public data base, she said.

Such information was crucial in developing new vaccines for animals and humans, as well as bird flu diagnostic tests and other epidemic controls, she said.

"We need to clear up the picture and for this the sharing of information is vital," Hall said. — AFP

- Source: *TODAYonline* - Singapore

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