

## Bird Flu News 30 April – 05 May 2006

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### Glaxo to mass-produce human bird flu vaccine

Sunday April 30, 2006



GlaxoSmithKline

Glaxosmithkline, the British drugs giant, is ready to start mass producing vaccines to protect humans from bird flu as western governments grow increasingly edgy about a pandemic that could derail the global economy.

Jean-Pierre Garnier, GSK's chief executive, will meet President George Bush in the next fortnight to brief him about progress in developing a vaccine that would offer protection against the deadly strain of bird flu virus H5N1.

Western governments have placed advance orders for the vaccine, which could be produced in factories in Europe and the United States by the end of the year. France and Britain alone have ordered 60 million doses.

Garnier says: 'They are keen to get things under way, investing in what is the equivalent of a half-finished house. There is a great deal of concern.'

GSK has already filed the results of initial tests with the European Medical Evaluation Agency (EMEA) and research has now moved from laboratories to full-scale trials on humans.

Both Europe and the US are allowing drugs companies to fast-track their applications for regulatory clearance.

Research has been carried out at GSK facilities on the continent and analysts say manufacturing could start in Europe as early as November. But the time it will take to implement preventative measures depends on final trials under way.

Sanofi of France is also working on a bird flu vaccine, but GSK's \$2bn project is more advanced as it has come up with a formula for a 'booster' which has eluded rivals.

- Richard Wachman, deputy business editor, The Observer

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## Bird flu - new restrictions at farms

30 April 2006 13:18

Trading standards officials this afternoon issued fresh advice and guidance to anybody travelling in and around parts of Norfolk hit by bird flu over the bank holiday following the latest outbreak of the disease at two farms.

Fresh restrictions to contain the spread of bird flu are now in operation in a 1km area around the sites at Etling Green and North Tuddenham - at Mowles Manor Farm and Pound Farm, Norwich Road run by Geoffrey Dann and his son Simon.

Signs and posters are also being put up highlighting where measures are in place.

But officials insisted it was business as usual for Norfolk

David Collinson Trading Standards officials at Norfolk County Council said: "I want to reassure people who might see the signs that the restrictions only apply to the movement of poultry, captive birds and domestic mammals, but not pets.

"Every single road and footpath is open and this is nothing to do with the eggs or birds bought from any shop in or outside the zones.

"It does mean that vehicles passing through the restricted zone carrying poultry, captive birds or should not stop within the zone."

The orders advise all bird keepers within a declared zone to maintain high standards of biosecurity, and any movements of poultry and other captive birds within the zone must be licensed by a veterinary inspector. The county council is providing information to people within the zones – including more than two dozen poultry keepers.

Becky Hellard, chief executive of Breckland District Council said: "It's business as usual and we are pleased that people are making the most of their Bank Holiday weekend.

A restriction zone is about the movement of poultry, captive birds and domestic mammals in a very small area and we continue to support Defra, who are leading on this."

Nigel Joice, from Norfolk NFU said local emergency planning arrangements were working well.  
- SHAUN LOWTHORPE

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## Bird flu hits ninth poultry farm in Pakistan

01 May 2006



Islamabad: The H5N1 strain of avian influenza has struck the ninth poultry farm in Pakistan as authorities struggled to contain the spread of the deadly virus at poorly maintained facilities, officials said Monday.

The authorities culled 16,000 birds Sunday at the poultry farm in Pindi Bhattian district in the Punjab province, about 220 km south of the capital.

Commissioner of livestock and animal husbandry, Muhammad Afzal, said the chickens were killed after tests confirmed the presence of the disease at the farm.

Earlier, the deadly virus infected eight farms April 17-24, all of them on the outskirts of Islamabad.

More than 40,000 chickens have been culled in less than two weeks with about half a million eggs destroyed.

Pakistan first suspected the H5N1 strain in two farms of the North-Western Frontier Province (NWFP) on Feb 27, confirmed later by the world reference laboratory for avian influenza at Weybridge, England.

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## Experts say bird flu virus survives longer

Tue May 2, 2006 8:37 AM BST

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - Leading influenza experts urged nations not to lower their guard against the deadly and hardy H5N1 virus, saying it now survives longer in higher temperatures and in wet and moist conditions.

Scientists previously found the virus to be most active and transmissible among birds in the cooler months from October to March in the northern hemisphere, and many people were hoping for some respite in the coming summer months.

But influenza expert Robert Webster warned against complacency and underestimating the virus, which made its first documented jump to humans from birds in 1997 in Hong Kong, killing six people.

"When we tested the virus in Hong Kong from 1997, the virus was killed at 37 degrees Celsius (98 Fahrenheit) in two days. The current H5N1 is still viable for six days at 37," said Webster, from St Jude Children's Research Hospital in the U.S. city Memphis.

"H5N1 at room temperatures can stay (alive) for at least a week in wet conditions," Webster told Reuters on the eve of a bird flu conference organised by the Lancet medical journal in Singapore.

"One of the often overlooked facts about influenza is that it's more heat stable than people realise, especially under moist, damp conditions ... Don't trust it," he said.

Webster said heat-stable strains of H5N1 were already circulating in ducks in Vietnam, Indonesia, China in 2004 and 2005 and experts would have to test if this trait was in the variants now circulating in India, Africa, Europe and parts of the Middle East.

Since re-emerging in Asia in late 2003, the H5N1 virus is known to have infected 205 people, killing 113 of them. In the past few months, it has spread from Asia to parts of Europe, the Middle East and Africa.  
- Reuters UK

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## BIRD FLU INTERVIEW

02 May 2006 11:04:00 GMT



JAKARTA, May 2 (Reuters) - Indonesia, the nation with the most bird flu deaths this year, has the will to combat the disease but its provinces have fallen short at putting plans into action, a World Health Organisation official said on Tuesday.

Bird flu has killed at least 24 people in Indonesia since 2003. Only Vietnam has more fatalities from the H5N1 avian flu virus, but so far in 2006 that country has reported no deaths.

Shigeru Omi, World Health Organisation director for the Western Pacific region, said Indonesia should learn from how Vietnam stopped the spread through aggressive campaigning at all levels of government.

"In the Vietnam case, the government made extraordinary efforts to mobilise community awareness," Omi told Reuters in an interview. "I hope Indonesia follows that model. I hope they can be more aggressive."

Omi said Indonesia's problems are at the local level, in the far-flung provinces of an archipelago that stretches the width of the United States.

"The level of public awareness is insufficient. The surveillance and reporting system to detect outbreaks among chickens is not sensitive enough," the Manila-based Japanese doctor said.

#### DECENTRALISATION

Indonesia has formed a national committee to tackle the bird flu danger, its president has made combatting the disease a top priority, and a comprehensive guideline on how to make things work has been formulated.

But while most of the birdflu deaths have come from Jakarta and its suburbs, local officials only launched a door-to-door campaign to control the disease in the metropolitan area that is home to 14 million people at the end of February.

After a media blitz during the kick-off of that campaign, news about the programme's progress has faded and the latest confirmed bird flu fatality came from Tangerang, a western suburb of Jakarta where Indonesia's first birdflu death came from.

Indonesian central government officials blame recent decentralisation laws for the lack of gusto on the local level. The laws make it difficult for the ministries at the centre to control regional policies.

"The message needs to be delivered to the local communities," Omi said. "I think the district level authorities should feel that this is their responsibility, their obligation to stamp out."

"Decentralisation is ... a fact of life. You have to make sure the districts come forward and take on the challenge as the real focal point in implementing necessary measures," he said.

With 98 out of the world's 113 birdflu fatalities, Pacific Asia may be the place where a birdflu pandemic could start and the region needs to be prepared, Omi said.

"Asia is still the epicentre of the transmission. It is possible that if and when pandemic emerges, we will not be surprised if it will start with Asia," he said.

- Reuters - By Achmad Sukarsono

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#### Vical bird flu vaccine stops H5N1 in animals

Tue May 2, 2006 6:29 PM BST

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - An experimental bird flu vaccine may show the potential to protect not only against the feared H5N1 virus but perhaps other strains of influenza as well, researchers said on Tuesday.

Tests in mice and ferrets show the vaccine, being developed by San Diego-based Vical Incorporated, protects mice and ferrets against the H5N1 avian influenza virus. And it protected mice against seasonal human flu viruses, too -- meaning it may offer potential as a "universal" flu vaccine.

But Dr. Richard Webby of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, who tested the vaccine, played down its immediate significance.

"It is something that is promising at least in mice, but mice are probably the easiest of all animals to achieve this cross-protection in, I think," Webby said in a telephone interview.

Nonetheless, the report sent Vical's shares soaring. At noon they were trading at \$7.02, up more than 27 percent.

Webby said the next step is to test the vaccine in ferrets, considered the best animal "model" for human flu infection, to see if the shot offers cross-protection against other flu strains.

"A universal vaccine is the big goal. There are various approaches trying to get there. This is one of them," Webby said.

Achieving cross-protection would mean that new vaccines would not have to be formulated every flu season and could provide a chance to stockpile vaccine ahead of a pandemic.

- Reuters UK

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## APEC to hold bird flu drill

May 3, 2006 Wednesday



Danang, Vietnam (dpa) - At least eight Asia-Pacific countries will cooperate next month in the first regional test of responses to a potential influenza pandemic that could kill millions people, officials said Thursday.

The exercise, to be held June 7-8 and coordinated by Australia and Singapore, is to be based on the scenario that an avian-flu virus - possibly the deadly H5N1 strain that has swept through poultry in Asia, Europe and Africa in the past year - has mutated into a human flu strain and started to spread.

The plan was announced at a meeting in Vietnam of high-ranking officials from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) organization on preventing and responding to any new flu pandemic.

It would be the first real-time, regional exercise on a pandemic flu and would be a "desktop" rehearsal in which emergency officials stay in their home-country offices to practise how best to communicate in a global health crisis, said coordinator Neil Head, director of Emergency Management Australia.

"You definitely won't see people running around in masks," Head said. "It's important in this first step of the exercise that we do something that involves people sitting at their own desks, which is where they would normally be, should there be a crisis they have to respond to."

All 21 Apec member countries agreed to participate in the exercise at a regional meeting last year although, so far, eight have signed up for full participation in June, according to the organizers, who would not name the eight countries.

In the three-day Vietnam meeting, senior Apec-member officials were hammering out a proposed regional action plan that would coordinate responses if a pandemic strain of flu were to emerge. The plan is to be presented to health and agriculture ministers for approval on Friday.

The meeting was also evaluating the status of H5N1, considered a likely candidate to become a pandemic strain. The H5N1 virus is now primarily a bird disease that in rare cases infects humans and has killed 113 people since 2003, but scientists fear that if the virus mutates to become easily contagious among humans, millions could die in the first flu pandemic in decades.

Monitoring and containment of bird flu in domestic poultry, plus sharing information among countries, were expected to be main features of the regional plan.

Health experts said controlling H5N1 and other flu strains in poultry could slow or even prevent their mutation into a devastating new human virus - which hasn't been seen since 1968 - by limiting the virus' contact with humans and thus its chances of adapting to be spread easily among people. Early detection in human outbreaks would also allow the UN's World Health Organization (WHO) to fly in anti-virals to the area.

"The key to this effort is coordination," said John Lange, the United States' special representative for avian influenza. "Influenza does not know borders. We have to work together on this."

The United States this week unveiled its own national pandemic-response plan, focusing on school closures and travel restrictions, but making clear that an influenza pandemic would be hard to slow, let alone stop. Even with early detection, flu is devilishly hard to halt, and a vaccine is unlikely to be developed for months after a new virus emerges.

"There are limits to what we can do," Lange admitted in Vietnam on Thursday. "But there is so much that can be done in terms of dealing with the outbreaks when they occur, helping governments to improve their surveillance capacity."

The ministers were also expected to discuss how to keep national and global economic networks from grinding to a halt if large numbers of workers stay home and travel is restricted.

"Apec is uniquely placed to examine economic and trade issues with health," said Ian Shugart, Canada's assistant deputy health minister. "As those economies that have been affected by avian influenza know very well, health threats can have a serious impact on trade and economic activities more generally."

The world has not seen a flu pandemic since 1968, when about 1 million people died, but scientists said that statistically one breaks out about every 40 years. WHO has warned that it is probably only a matter of time before a new flu pandemic and said that today's frequent air travel could allow a new virus for which people have no natural immunity to sweep the world in weeks.

Scientists have been nervously watching the H5N1 avian-influenza virus, which has spread from Asia to Africa and Europe within a year, causing widespread concern.

H5N1 now affects mostly poultry - hundreds of millions of Asian chickens have died from it - but in rare cases, it can infect humans and has killed more than half of the people known to have been infected since 2003.

Vietnam has been the country hardest-hit by bird flu with 42 human deaths and a drag on the economy of nearly 1 per cent of GDP in lost income from poultry and tourism.

However, Vietnam has not seen any new human H5N1 cases this year after a widespread campaign to vaccinate domestic poultry against the virus and educate its 83 million people to stay away from sick chickens and cook poultry hygienically.

The worldwide number of H5N1 victims is miniscule compared with established diseases such as malaria, diarrhea or even common flu strains, which kill about 100,000 people worldwide each year. But because the influenza virus spreads quickly and before the infected show symptoms, once a new virus emerges, it can be hard to stop, and many more people without immunity would die.

The worst recorded flu pandemic, the "Spanish flu" of 1918, killed more than 40 million people, more than the fighting in World War I. That virus was originally a bird-flu strain that mutated to infect humans.  
- Bangkok Post

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## Egypt reports fifth bird flu death

05.04.2006, 09:03 PM

CAIRO (AFX) - An Egyptian woman died Thursday of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, the fifth fatal case in the country, the official MENA news agency reported, citing the health ministry.

The ministry had reported on Wednesday that the 27-year-old was infected by poultry that she reared domestically in the Nile Delta governorate of Menufiya.

Out of the 13 human cases of bird flu that have been reported among Egyptians since mid-March, five were fatal and eight people recovered after being treated with Tamiflu.

A total of 206 people worldwide are confirmed by the World Health Organization to have been infected, out of which 113 died.

AFX News Limited

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## Ivory Coast confirms bird flu

Thu 4 May 2006

ABIDJAN (Reuters) - Tests at a reference laboratory have confirmed deadly H5N1 bird flu in Ivory Coast, triggering extra control measures in the sixth African country hit by the virus, Ivorian animal health authorities said on Thursday.

Bakary Cisse, head of Ivory Coast's epidemiological animal health surveillance network told Reuters that tests by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) laboratory in Padua, Italy, had confirmed birds in the main city Abidjan had contracted the virus.

"It's certainly H5N1," Cisse told Reuters.

He said a range of control and prevention measures already drawn up by Ivory Coast would be implemented to stop the spread of H5N1, which has killed more than 100 people since 2003, mainly in Asia.

The OIE said a week ago the West African country had reported its first H5N1 outbreaks based on tests by two local clinics.

Ivory Coast's Agriculture Minister Alphonse Douati appeared on television late on Wednesday to say the tests in Italy had confirmed bird flu, although he did not specify the H5N1 strain.

He said several ducks and a sparrow-hawk had died from bird flu in Abidjan, the country's main port and business capital.

"The government has put measures in place to contain the spread of the disease, if not eradicate it," Douati said.

Douati also appealed to international bodies including the Rome-based United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to help Ivory Coast control bird flu and ensure safe supplies of chicken, a popular food source.

Ivorian animal health authorities were expected to announce details of more stringent controls later on Thursday, but Cisse said certain measures had already been determined.

Poultry sales would be banned within a radius of 3 km (2 miles) of the sites where H5N1 had been confirmed, and animal health authorities would disinfect markets where poultry had been sold to prevent the virus spreading, he said.

"We will also have to identify (poultry) owners within that radius before undertaking culling and compensation," he said.

Since the spread of the H5N1 virus around the world from Asia became regarded as inevitable last year, many experts have voiced fears that poor human and animal health infrastructure in Africa would allow it to spread undetected and unchecked in the poorest continent, where millions of chickens live in backyards.

In West Africa, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Burkina Faso have already confirmed outbreaks of H5N1 bird flu this year, but so far no human infections have been found.

But in Egypt, in Africa's far north-east, at least 13 people have contracted the disease, including four who have died.

- Reuters - By Loucoumane Coulibaly

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### **Poultry exports almost nil after bird flu outbreak'**

Friday, May 05, 2006 at 0107 hours IST

NEW DELHI, MAY 4: Samples from the bird flu-affected areas of the country are still being tested as part of efforts to ward off resurgence of avian influenza, PMA Hakeem, secretary, animal husbandry and dairy, said on Thursday. He said that while the local poultry business has gradually started picking up, exports have practically come to a standstill.

"We have to be alert. Surveillance is on... Samples from affected areas of Navapur district in Maharashtra and adjoining areas are still being tested to eliminate any threat of avian influenza surfacing," Mr Hakeem said in an interview.

Avian influenza was first detected in Navapur on February 18, when over 11,700 samples were sent to the High Security Laboratory of Bhopal for tests. On March 14, another outbreak was detected in four villages of Jalgaon district. However, no case of humans being infected with the deadly flu has been found in the country.

Samples are being collected from each block of 38 districts, including Navapur and Jalgaon, for the test, he said. "Since the outbreak of the disease in February, only 50 samples were found positive. There has been no further outbreak and the situation is under control now," he said.

"So far, one million birds have been culled and we have paid adequate compensation to the poultry owners in the affected areas," Mr Hakim said. Out of the total compensation paid, 50% of the cost has been borne by the Centre while the state government has paid the rest.

Agriculture minister Sharad Pawar had also announced a four percentage point rebate on interest on loans availed by the poultry industry to help the beleaguered sector cope with the bird flu threat and tide over losses. "Though the Rs 200 billion worth Indian poultry sector has suffered acute financial losses after the outbreak of the flu, it will be difficult to quantify the damage," he said. "The sector has been badly hit, but because of the nature of the trade it will be difficult to measure the extent of damage," Mr Hakeem said.

- Crisil MarketWire

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