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Indonesian market vendor dies of bird flu

2006-01-29 13:36:37

BEIJING, Jan. 29 -- An Indonesian market vendor, who had a history of contact with sick poultry, died of the H5N1 strain of the bird flu Thursday.

Officials at Jakarta's Infectious Diseases Hospital said local tests for the 22-year-old indicate he had the virus.

If blood and swab samples sent to a World Health Organisation-approved laboratory in Hong Kong come back positive, Indonesia will raise its human death toll to 15.

A team of WHO officials toured markets in densely congested neighborhoods of the capital to stress the need for improved sanitation and hygiene. Alexander von Hildebrand, WHO Regional adviser, says more awareness about potential transmission of the disease needs to be raised.

"We have noted that the awareness of potential transmission is not really there yet. In the sense that for instance, some of the sellers are keeping chickens very close to ducks. Which can be a problem because ducks do not show the disease but can carry it and transmit it."

Hundreds of millions of chickens and ducks have died or been culled since the H5N1 strain of the bird flu started ravaging poultry stocks across Asia in 2003.

The disease has also jumped to humans, killing at least 83 people in Asia and in Turkey.

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Tests finds no bird flu in Romanian woman

2006-01-29 10:20:40

BUCHAREST, Jan. 28 (Xinhuanet) -- A Romanian woman suspected of having caught bird flu has tested negative for the deadly virus, the Romanian news agency Rompres reported on Saturday.

"From preliminary clinical tests there is nothing to sustain the bird flu diagnosis," said Mariana Mardarescu, spokeswoman for the Matei Bals Infectious Diseases Hospital where the woman received treatment.

The 81-year-old woman comes from a village in east Romania. The village has been quarantined after H5N1 was detected among birds there and the woman was admitted a week ago to hospital with a high fever and respiratory problems.

Mardarescu said the results of further tests would be available on Sunday. The woman will remain under medical supervision for up to a week.

Bird flu has been found in 25 villages in east and south Romania since October, but no human cases have been reported there. Authorities have so far lifted the quarantine on 16 areas.

The H5N1 bird flu virus was first found to have spread to people in 1997. It resurfaced in 2003 and has since infected at least 152 people and killed 83, according to the World Health Organization.

Scientists fear the virus could soon mutate into a form easily transmissible between humans and cause a global pandemic similar to the 1918 Spanish flu outbreak.

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Bird flu found in Saudi Arabia

28/01/2006 22:40

Riyadh - Saudi authorities have culled 37 falcons following the discovery of five positive cases of the H5 virus of the avian flu on Saturday.

According to a spokesperson for the Saudi agricultural ministry, a ministry team inspecting falcons kept in a veterinary centre in Riyadh, which cares for birds usually used for hunting, discovered the cases.

The ministry said 37 falcons, including the five cases "were killed and burned".

He added laboratory tests were being conducted to establish if the cases also test positive for the N virus - "the other component of the (bird flu) virus".

In November, Saudi Arabia banned all bird imports from neighbouring countries amid heightened regional concerns about bird flu.

The decision came a day after Kuwait announced the discovery of a bird carrying the deadly H5N1 strain.

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U.N. agency tests dead Iraqi man for bird flu

28 Jan 2006 18:25:01 GMT

GENEVA, Jan 28 (Reuters) - Tests for bird flu will be carried out on a dead Iraqi man, whose niece also died 10 days ago and first raised fears that the deadly virus had reached the country, the World Health Organisation said on Saturday.

Although tests made in Iraq on samples from the girl, who died on Jan. 17 near Sulaimaniyah, not far from the country's border with Turkey, were negative, both had suffered breathing difficulties, WHO spokeswoman Maria Cheng told Reuters.

"Given that both these people had severe respiratory problems and that it is near the border with Turkey, we need to check," she told Reuters.

Cheng said that samples from the man, who died on Friday, would be sent to a WHO-affiliated laboratory in Britain, the same one that was used to verify cases in the Turkish outbreak.

Turkey reported more than 20 human cases of the avian virus this month, several months after it first detected the virus in poultry.

So far there have been no confirmed cases amongst poultry in Iraq. However, some birds died recently in the area from which the girl and her uncle came, but it was not yet known whether the deaths were due to bird flu, Cheng said.

"Birds often die of many things," she said.

"It would not be surprising if it had spread from Turkey, but at the same time, we have no evidence yet that it has," Cheng added.

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