

**Avian Flu Found in Nigeria, Shows Spread to Africa (Update2)
2006-02-08 16:51 (New York)**

(Adds WHO comment in seventh, eighth and 13th paragraphs.)

By Kristen Hallam

Feb. 8 (Bloomberg) -- Avian influenza was found in poultry in northern Nigeria, the World Organization for Animal Health said, the first evidence the virus has spread to Africa.

About 40,000 birds have died since the H5N1 virus outbreak began Jan. 10, the United Nations agency, also known as OIE, said today in an e-mailed statement. The agency will send a team to the village of Jaji in the Kaduna state to help the government, which is trying to quarantine the area.

"No country is risk-free, and we are facing a serious international crisis," said Samuel Jutzi, director of the Food and Agriculture Organization's animal health division, in an e-mailed statement today. "It is important that local and national authorities within other countries in the region remain vigilant for possible outbreaks."

At least 19 other countries have reported outbreaks of the virus in birds, which can sicken people who have contact with them. Human infection raises the risk that the virus may change into a form easily spread among people and trigger a pandemic.

Africa, already grappling with an AIDS epidemic and famine, may prove the weakest link in a global effort to stem bird flu, scientists and government officials said at a conference in Beijing last month.

Millions of birds flock to the Great Rift Valley, running 8,700 kilometers (5,400 miles) from Syria to Mozambique, between July and October on their way from northern Asia to South Africa.

Quarantine

The only outbreak confirmed to be caused by H5N1, the bird virus that has spread from Asia to Eastern Europe and the Middle East, appears to be confined to a large commercial poultry farm, the World Health Organization said in a statement today.

"Investigations are urgently needed to determine whether the outbreak, which began almost a month ago, has spread from the farm to affect household flocks," the statement said. "Poultry deaths in the adjacent province of Kano have been reported, but the cause has not yet been determined."

The Nigerian government is trying to quarantine the area where the infected birds were found, disinfect the farm and control the movement of animals, the OIE said. The country is home to about 140 million poultry, the FAO said.

The OIE laboratory in Padova, Italy, confirmed the H5N1 infection in the Nigerian birds and is conducting further tests, the agency said. The FAO, also a UN agency, will send two experts to advise local authorities on control measures. Both agencies said they didn't know what sparked the outbreak in the birds,

which were being raised for egg laying.

Finances

In Nigeria, where the average life expectancy is about 46, the government health budget allocates the equivalent of about 21 U.S. cents per person each year. The U.S. government's health and human services agency, by contrast, plans to spend roughly \$2,300 per person next year.

Africa's most populous nation has committed \$2.1 million for measures such as public awareness campaigns, training for veterinarians and doctors, and expanding laboratory services.

The World Health Organization said its staff in Harare, Zimbabwe, held an emergency meeting today to plan a response. The agency is ready to send supplies and a team of experts to the area, said the statement, released on WHO's Web site.

Hong Kong Controls

"If the situation in Nigeria gets out of control, it will have a devastating impact on the poultry population in the region, it will seriously damage the livelihoods of millions of people, and it will increase the exposure of humans to the virus," the FAO's Jutzi said.

Hong Kong today tightened regulations on residents keeping poultry in a bid to prevent the spread of bird flu. Households will be banned from raising chickens, ducks, geese, pigeons and quails in backyards, Hong Kong's Health, Welfare and Food Bureau said in a statement on its Web site. Residents will face fines of as much as HK\$100,000 (\$12,900) for violating the regulations.

The H5N1 virus has killed at least 88 of the 165 people known to have been infected, according to World Health Organization estimates. Reports of confirmed bird-flu fatalities reached a 12-month high in January after the number of reported new cases rose each month since July.

Iraq is treating seven people for suspected bird flu in the country, where a possible third fatality indicates the lethal virus may have spread to the south, the WHO said. Most patients "have reported a history of direct contact with diseased poultry," the organization said.

Pet Birds

A 13-year-old boy from Iraq's southern Omara area, who developed symptoms of avian flu on Feb. 1, was hospitalized with severe pneumonia on Feb. 5 and died the same day, the WHO said yesterday in a statement on its Web site. Previous cases in Iraq were found in the northern region of Sulaimaniyah.

"Although no poultry deaths have been reported in the area, pet birds kept by the family are said to have died near the time of symptom onset," the WHO said. Samples from the boy have been taken and Iraqi health authorities will visit the Omara area today to investigate.

A WHO-led team is in the Erbil and Sulaimaniyah areas, and a 24-hour emergency operations center has been set up in the WHO regional office in Cairo to help coordination and provide back-up support, WHO said.

China Finds 11th Case of Human Bird Flu, Health Ministry Says 2006-02-08 18:11 (New York)

By Allen T. Cheng

Feb. 9 (Bloomberg) -- China reported its 11th human case of avian influenza to the World Health Organization, the Ministry of Health said in a statement posted last night on its Web site.

The patient is a 26-year-old woman surnamed Lin from Zhangpu county in Fujian province in southern China, the report said. The farmer fell ill on Jan. 10 with symptoms of fever and pneumonia and is now in stable condition in hospital, it said.

Lin tested positive for H5N1 virus in accordance to WHO standards and all of her acquaintances have been put under medical observation, the statement said. No avian influenza outbreaks have been reported in the area where Lin lives, it said.

China yesterday reported a new bird flu outbreak, the first in the nation in a month. China's Ministry of Agriculture said local health officials culled 187,745 chickens after the H5N1 virus killed 15,000 chickens in northern Shanxi province.

China had lifted quarantine restrictions on all areas affected by avian influenza because no outbreaks among poultry had occurred in the country since Jan. 7, state news agency Xinhua said on Jan. 27, citing a Health Ministry announcement.

On Jan. 23, the Health Ministry reported a 10th human case of the deadly H5N1 strain. At least seven people have died in China from avian influenza, according to the Geneva-based World Health Organization.

Hong Kong Hospital Says 20-Month-Old Boy Doesn't Have Bird Flu 2006-02-08 04:51 (New York)

By Jason Gale

Feb. 8 (Bloomberg) -- A 20-month-old Hong Kong boy who was admitted to the city's Queen Elizabeth Hospital yesterday tested negative for the H5N1 strain of avian influenza.

``He is still hospitalized in the isolation ward and his condition is stable," the hospital said in statement distributed by the local government. It didn't give further details.

Hong Kong Bans Homes Raising Fowl as Bird Flu Spreads (Update1) 2006-02-08 01:03 (New York)

(Adds poultry culling in 10th paragraph.)

By Jason Gale

Feb. 8 (Bloomberg) -- Hong Kong tightened regulations on residents keeping poultry in a bid to prevent the spread of bird flu, as the World Health Organization said the virus may have reached an area of southern Iraq.

Households will be banned from raising chickens, ducks, geese, pigeons and quails in backyards from Feb. 13, Hong Kong's Health, Welfare and Food Bureau said today in a statement on its Web site. Residents will face fines of as much as HK\$100,000 (\$12,900) for violating the regulations.

Iraq is treating seven people for suspected bird flu in the country, where a possible third fatality indicates the lethal virus may have spread to the south, the WHO said. Most patients "have reported a history of direct contact with diseased poultry," it said.

At least 19 countries have reported outbreaks of the H5N1 virus in birds, which risks infecting people and increases the chance that the virus may change into a form easily spread among people. Such a virus may touch off a pandemic similar to the one that killed as many as 50 million people in 1918.

Hong Kong legislation previously allowed private poultry ownership of no more than 20 fowl. Teams in Hong Kong will enforce the new law, aimed at protecting public health and reducing the risk of more outbreaks in the city, authorities said in the statement. An outbreak in Hong Kong eight years ago infected 18 people, killing six of them.

Cases in Iraq

A 13-year-old boy from Iraq's southern Omara area, who developed symptoms of avian flu on Feb. 1, was hospitalized with severe pneumonia on Feb. 5 and died the same day, the WHO said yesterday in a statement on its Web site. Previous cases in Iraq were found in the northern region of Sulaimaniyah.

"Although no poultry deaths have been reported in the area, pet birds kept by the family are said to have died near the time of symptom onset," the WHO said. Samples from the boy have been taken and Iraqi health authorities will visit the Omara area today to investigate.

The H5N1 virus has killed at least 88 of the 165 people known to have been infected, the WHO said on Feb. 6. Reports of confirmed bird-flu fatalities reached a 12-month high last month, while new cases have risen each month since July.

Iraqi Culls

Iraq became the seventh country to report a human H5N1 case after the disease was confirmed in an area close to the border with Turkey on Jan. 30.

About 2,500 chickens, geese, turkeys and ducks were destroyed in the villages of Sarkapkan and Dawaw in Sulaimaniyah after 650 fowl died in an outbreak there that probably began on Jan. 18, Dawood Sharief, director general of Iraq's veterinary services, said in a Feb. 2 report to the World Organization for

Animal Health.

``The area has around 1.3 million poultry mainly raised by individual households, who depend on these animals for income and food," the WHO said. ``Discussions are under way to develop a compensation scheme that could lessen the hardship on these families."

A WHO-led team is in the Erbil and Sulaimaniyah areas, and a 24-hour emergency operations center has been set up in the WHO regional office in Cairo to help coordination and provide back-up support, WHO said.

China Farm

China's Agriculture Ministry said late yesterday that avian flu was found on a chicken farm in the northern province of Shanxi, the first outbreak in poultry to be reported in the country in a month.

Health authorities in Shanxi's Yangquan city, about 300 kilometers (186 miles) southwest of Beijing, culled 187,745 chickens after the H5N1 avian influenza strain killed 15,000 of the fowl by Feb. 3, the ministry said on its Web site.

In Hong Kong, officials found a dead chicken that probably died of the H5N1 virus, and called on residents in the area to seek medical advice if they become ill, the government said.

The chicken was found on Feb. 4 in Wu Tai Circuit in the northwestern suburb of Tuen Mun in the New Territories. The bird tested positive for an H5 subtype of avian flu. Further tests are under way to determine whether it is H5N1.

[CSL Says It Plans to Introduce Flu Vaccine in U.S. \(Update2\)](#) **[2006-02-07 12:37 \(New York\)](#)**

(Recasts lead, adds CEO comment in fourth and final paragraphs, other suppliers in sixth through 11th.)

By John Lauerman

Feb. 7 (Bloomberg) -- CSL Ltd., the Australian maker of drugs and blood products, plans to introduce a flu vaccine in the U.S., where concerns about supply and the possibility of a lethal flu pandemic have spurred demand.

Human tests of the vaccine are slated for this year, and CSL will apply within 12 months for marketing clearance, the Melbourne-based drugmaker said today in a statement. CSL would become the fifth source of flu vaccine for the U.S.

Fears of an international outbreak of a lethal flu strain have focused attention on vaccine supply and lured new suppliers. Sanofi Aventis SA, the biggest provider of flu shots to the U.S., said it received a barrage of orders for the 2006-2007 season. CSL is investing US\$60 million to double a Melbourne plant's capacity to about 40 million doses a season, half of which may be sent to the U.S., the company said.

``We've seen that policy makers in the U.S. are now making a

coherent plan to ensure appropriate uptake of vaccine and reimbursement consistent with increased uptake," CSL Chief Executive Officer Brian McNamee said today in a telephone interview.

The company's shares fell 1 cent to close at A\$46.23 in Melbourne. They have gained 40 percent in the past 12 months.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends flu vaccine for about 190 million Americans, most of whom are at increased risk of complications. Health officials expect 120 million to 130 million doses for the 2006-2007 season.

Sanofi in Pennsylvania

Sanofi said Feb. 1 that 50 million doses of flu vaccine available for October distribution sold out within hours of going on sale Jan. 31. The Paris-based company, the only one that makes flu vaccine in the U.S., plans to double production in Pennsylvania by 2008.

CSL, which sells flu vaccine in 16 countries, is following GlaxoSmithKline Plc and Novartis AG to the U.S. Glaxo is buying Vancouver-based vaccine maker ID Biomedical Corp. and expects to make as many as 30 million doses for the U.S. next season.

Novartis, based in Switzerland, got permission from the European Commission yesterday to buy Emeryville, California-based Chiron Corp., which expects to make 40 million doses for the next flu season. MedImmune Inc., based in Gaithersburg, Maryland, makes the FluMist nasal spray vaccine.

Calls for U.S. Production

U.K. regulators shut Chiron's Liverpool plant just before the 2004-2005 season, halving the U.S. supply. Republican Senators Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, Ted Stevens of Alaska and Judd Gregg of New Hampshire, and Iowa Democratic Senator Tom Harkin called for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to stimulate domestic production of flu vaccine in a hearing last week.

CSL will get results from its first human trial of an experimental pandemic flu vaccine within two weeks, McNamee said. The company will file for approval in Australia and is considering doing so in the U.S., he said.

Drugmakers are experimenting with chemicals that might boost supply of pandemic vaccine. CSL makes such an adjuvant, called Iscomatrix, in the Chicago area, McNamee said.

"If we move to an adjuvanted flu product, the U.S. would be involved in manufacturing," he said. Production of a pandemic flu vaccine probably wouldn't take place for several years, McNamee said.