

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

February 22 - 28, 2024

WEEKLY EVENTS

Information from the ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Center reported disease outbreaks in countries within the ASEAN region as follows:

- On February 22, 2024, Vietnam reported its first death due to rabies this year. The deceased was a 4-year-old female living in Ham Tan district, Binh Thuan province, bitten by a neighbor's dog on February 8. The deceased had not been vaccinated and received only home remedies. Her condition worsened, leading to hospitalization, and she passed away on February 15.

- From the beginning of this year to February 22, 2024, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reported 1,053 cases of dengue fever, with one death. The highest number of cases was found in Sekong province, followed by Xiangkhoang and Luang Namtha.

- On February 23, 2024, Indonesia reported four deaths due to dengue fever at Jombang Hospital, including three children and one adult, marking the first four dengue-related deaths of this year. Currently, there are continuous admissions for treatment at this hospital, totaling 331 cases since the beginning of the year.

- On February 23, 2024, Singapore's National Environment Agency reported a cumulative total of 2,970 cases of dengue fever since the beginning of the year until February 22. The number of reported cases continues to increase each week.

Each country has implemented measures to investigate and comprehensively manage disease outbreaks.

MEASLES CAN BE PREVENTED BY VACCINATION

The Department of Disease Control's measles surveillance data under the measles elimination program indicated an increasing trend of measles cases since January 2024. From January 1st to February 20th, there were 37 measles cases confirmed via laboratory testing, which is higher than the number of cases reported during the same period during the past three years. There have been no reported deaths this year. The highest number of cases were found in the age group of children under 5 years old. The provinces with the highest number of reported measles cases were Pattani, Phuket, Songkhla, and Yala, respectively. The majority of patients, 85%, had never been vaccinated or had no vaccination history for measles. The provinces with the highest incidence of the disease were found to have low vaccine coverage, leading to a higher risk of measles outbreaks. The World Health Organization has warned that more than half of the countries in the world are at risk of measles outbreaks due to the current low measles vaccine coverage in many countries. In Thailand, there was a major measles outbreak from 2018-2019 with more than 3,000 confirmed measles patients in each of those years. However, the number of measles patients decreased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, possibly due to measures to prevent COVID-19, also a respiratory infectious disease.

Measles is caused by the measles virus, which is found in the nose and throat of an infected person and can spread via coughing, sneezing, or through close contact with others. It can easily spread through the inhalation of virus-containing droplets from patients' respiratory secretions. Patients can typically spread the virus four days before rashes appear until four days after the rash appears. The symptoms of measles usually start with fever, runny nose, and dry cough, followed by high fever, red and watery eyes. The fever may last about 3-4 days, then red rashes appear as raised bumps that join together. Serious complications include pneumonia and encephalitis, which can be fatal. There is no specific treatment for measles; treatment is supportive and depends on the symptoms. The best prevention, especially in young children, is measles vaccination. Public awareness and advocacy to emphasize the importance of vaccination and to ensure that children receive vaccination according to the Ministry of Public Health's guidelines are crucial for effective prevention.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Public health officials should coordinate with local authorities to provide information to the community regarding measles. This should include the causes, symptoms, transmission, and prevention methods. If individuals show symptoms such as fever and rash, it is recommended to seek medical attention immediately. If a doctor diagnoses measles, infected people should refrain from work or school and avoid traveling to densely populated areas to reduce the spread of the disease. Those who come into close contact with cases should closely monitor themselves for fever and rash. During symptomatic periods, wearing face masks and avoiding close contact with others is advisable. The best prevention method, especially for young children, is receiving the measles vaccine, which includes a dose at 9 months and another dose at 18 months of age, available at nearby public health facilities. Medical personnel should assess vaccine coverage in the area and increase vaccination rates in target groups to at least 95% to prevent disease outbreaks in the community. In the event of suspected measles cases, responsible individuals should conduct disease investigations and collect blood samples for confirmatory testing within 48 hours, report measles patients through the disease elimination project database and conduct contact tracing of high-risk close contacts to prevent the spread of the infection in the community.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

Multisectoral Capacity Development Program for Public Health Emergency Detection and Response in Border Areas

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