

# REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

June 6 - 12, 2024

## WEEKLY EVENTS

- On May 22, 2024, Blue Dot Event Alerts reported that the International Health Regulations coordinator in India informed the World Health Organization of a confirmed case of H9N2 avian influenza detected in late April. The patient, a 4-year-old child living in western Bengal, is the second recorded case of H9N2 infection, with the first case reported in 2019. The patient has a pre-existing condition of asthma. The disease investigation revealed that the patient had contact with poultry at home, and that poultry are raised in the residential area. No additional cases were found among family members, neighbors, or healthcare personnel who were in close contact with the patient. H9N2 influenza virus infections in humans occur occasionally due to the high prevalence and circulation of the virus in poultry. Currently, the WHO has assessed the public health risk of this situation as low, but it is recommended to closely monitor the situation to observe any changes in the virus among both animals and humans.
- From June 12 to 14, 2024, the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand and the Lao People's Democratic Republic co-hosted the 11th Mekong Traditional Medicine Network Meeting on the treatment of COVID-19 using traditional and local medical practices. Participants included representatives from six member countries, traditional healers, academics, entrepreneurs, and educational institutions. The meeting featured presentations, discussions, and demonstrations of traditional medical practices and outstanding works of traditional healers. This meeting aimed to enhance the network's capacity to address modern health issues, foster policy cooperation, research, and protect traditional knowledge, striving for academic excellence in ASEAN for better public health.

## INFLUENZA CAN BE PREVENTED WITH VACCINES AND SAFETY PRACTICES

The Division of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, reported influenza surveillance data for the year 2023. A total of 491,391 influenza cases were reported throughout the year. For 2024, from January to May, there were 133,775 cases. Comparing the data for the month of May, 6,425 cases were reported in May 2023, while 7,478 cases were reported in May 2024, indicating an increase from the same period last year. The age group with the highest number of cases is newborns to 4 years old, followed by the age group of 5-14 years and 15-24 years. Children and adolescents are groups that need special surveillance. It is expected that the number of cases will begin to rise in June and reach a peak number of cases from August to November, which is the rainy season and the period when influenza outbreaks typically occur.

The World Health Organization recommends annual influenza vaccinations before the outbreak season due to the yearly changes in influenza virus strains. This is to reduce the severity of the disease, economic losses for both the government and families, and the risk of death from complications of the disease, especially in the following seven risk groups:

1. Pregnant women with a gestational age of 4 months or more.
2. Children aged 6 months to 2 years.
3. Individuals with chronic diseases, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, and diabetes.
4. Elderly individuals aged 65 years and older.
5. Individuals with thalassemia and those with impaired immunity.
6. Obese individuals.
7. Individuals with cerebral palsy who are unable to care for themselves.

Public Health Officers from the Department of Disease Control, in collaboration with the National Health Security Office, are preparing to provide influenza vaccination services in a vaccination campaign from May 1 to August 31, 2024, or until the vaccine supplies are depleted. All Thai citizens with healthcare rights who fall into the seven risk groups can receive the 2024 influenza vaccine free of charge. Additionally, vaccines are being prepared for healthcare and public health personnel who are at risk of exposure to influenza in their work. The vaccines can be obtained at state health service facilities and private hospitals participating in the National Health Security Scheme nationwide.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Local officials and the Village Health Volunteers (VHVs) should coordinate with public health officers and local administrative organizations responsible for schools in the area to publicize and educate the public about influenza. This includes initial symptoms, modes of transmission, complications, and prevention methods. Educational institutions and community childcare centers, which frequently experience outbreaks, should follow the influenza prevention and control guidelines set by the Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health.

Additionally, they should emphasize the benefits of annual influenza vaccination to the residents, especially for the seven aforementioned risk groups. For those who have limited access to vaccines, maintaining good hygiene and prevention practices is effective for all respiratory infections. These measures include wearing masks in crowded places, covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, washing hands frequently, and maintaining distance from those with influenza-like symptoms. Those who exhibit symptoms should stay at home to prevent spreading the illness to others. This approach helps reduce the risk of outbreaks 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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## Sources

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