

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

September 22 - 28, 2022

WEEKLY EVENTS

- On September 23, 2022, the Department of Medical Services warned of a new drug called "Happy", which is spreading through Tachilek, Myanmar opposite of Mae Sai District, Chiang Rai, Thailand. This drug contains Benzylpiperazine (BPZ), a substance with a methamphetamine-like effect and is considered a stimulant. Abuse and addiction to BPZ can cause hallucinations or paranoia, especially if taken with alcoholic beverages or tobacco. Losing consciousness while using this drug can be life-threatening.
- September 28, 2022 is World Rabies Day. The Ministry of Public Health of the Lao People's Democratic Republic encourages people to bring their pets to receive rabies vaccinations free of charge. The government has made 30,000 doses available nationwide, as an effort to prevent human deaths caused by rabies. Bangkok, Thailand is also organizing rabies prevention activities under the concept "All sectors unite to make Thailand free from rabies".
- On September 27, 2022, the Office of International Cooperation, Department of Disease Control organized a meeting to prepare a 2023 cooperation plan between Thailand and Cambodia. This is a soft power approach to build upon public health cooperation between Thailand and neighboring countries.

COVID-19 TRANSITION: DANGEROUS DISEASE TO DISEASE UNDER SURVEILLANCE

On October 1, 2022, the Ministry of Public Health announced that the ministry-level public health emergency operations center has been deactivated for COVID-19 and that COVID-19 has been redesignated from a "dangerous communicable disease" to a "disease under surveillance". The adjustment of the disease threat level still guarantees COVID-19 patients the right to receive treatment in medical facilities free of charge if they have any of the following severe symptoms: cardiac arrest, airway obstruction, shortness of breath, conditions that cause severe respiratory symptoms, inability to breathe, shock, low blood pressure, or other symptoms that could lead to acute death.

The government has moved forward with its plan of vaccines for children between 6 months - 4 years old starting from October 1, 2022. In the beginning phase, 100,000 vaccine doses for children are available. Thailand is discontinuing the requirement for travelers to provide documents related to vaccination or ATK test results upon entering Thailand. The Ministry of Public Health predicts that there may be sporadic clusters in the aftermath of the policy changes. People are encouraged to cooperate in maintaining personal protection measures and continue wearing masks in high-risk areas.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Public health officers should cooperate with residents and communicate the importance of vaccination against COVID-19, especially in high-risk groups. To reduce the risk of spreading the disease people should continue to wear masks when in close contact with others or when in crowded places including areas where the ventilation system is not good. ATK tests are recommended if there is a suspected case. Detection of clusters should be reported to health officials immediately.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

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

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- <https://laotiantimes.com/2022/09/20/govt-will-give-free-rabies-shots-to-prevent-fatal-dog-bites/>
- Press release: Office of International Cooperation, Department of Disease Control on September 28, 2022: shorturl.at/fGIX1
- <https://mgronline.com/uptodate/detail/9650000084121>
- Image courtesy of: <https://covid19.thaipbs.or.th/gallery/?album=29436>