

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

July 6 - 12, 2023

WEEKLY EVENTS

- Since July 12, 2023, the Ministry of Public Health has been monitoring the operations of the Medical Office for Hajj Affairs in Thailand, which provides healthcare services for Thai Muslims traveling to participate in the Hajj pilgrimage to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2023. A temporary hospital with 30 beds has been established to offer consultation on health issues, symptom monitoring, and mobile medical units. Currently, healthcare services have been provided to over 7,000 Thai Muslim individuals, with the majority being in the age group of 51 to 60 years. The most common symptoms reported have been respiratory tract symptoms and muscle pain. Complications from chronic diseases such as asthma, heart disease, and kidney disease have been observed. A total of 59 patients have been referred to hospitals for further treatment, and there have been 13 reported deaths. The majority of deaths were due to sudden heart failure, asthma, and advanced-stage cancer.
- From July 13-14, 2023, the Office of International Cooperation, in collaboration with the Chanthaburi Provincial Health Office, conducted a tabletop exercise to respond to public health emergencies with a multisectoral approach along the border area. The simulated scenario was "Avian Influenza" held in Muang District, Chanthaburi Province. The objective of this meeting was to enhance the preparedness of personnel from various sectors in responding to public health emergencies and disease outbreaks between countries, as well as practicing integrated emergency management plans for public health. The meeting was attended by nearly 100 participants from various sectors.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT ANTHRAX

Based on the report of the anthrax outbreak in Indonesia, from May to July 2023 there were 96 cases and 9 deaths. Meanwhile, laboratory data from December 2022 to the present in Yogyakarta, Indonesia found the bacterial agent of anthrax in 11 cattle and 4 sheep. Relevant agencies have implemented strict measures and quarantine procedures for animals to prevent the spread of the disease.

Anthrax is caused by the bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*. This bacterium, when in a dry environment and suitable climate conditions, forms spores that are highly resistant to heat, cold, and disinfectants. The spores can persist in the environment for many years. Reports of this disease in animals and humans date back thousands of years. In Thailand, the disease is most commonly found in cattle, goats and sheep. It has been prevalent throughout the country, especially along the Thailand-Myanmar and Thailand-Laos border areas. The disease tends to recur in the same areas.

Transmission occurs through contact with sick animals or consumption of their meat, primarily through skin contact, inhalation, and ingestion. The incubation period of the disease is 1-5 days, but it can be up to 60 days. Skin symptoms include itching and the appearance of red pustules that turn into clear blisters within 2-6 days that eventually darken and resemble cigarette burns. Respiratory symptoms include fever, body aches, cough, chest pain, shortness of breath, and low oxygen levels, which can potentially result in death. Gastrointestinal symptoms cause inflammation and obstruction of the intestines, bleeding, and fluid accumulation in the abdomen. If there is a history of close contact with animals and symptoms consistent with the disease, medical attention should be sought, and a detailed risk history should be provided to the physician.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Local health official and livestock officials should jointly provide information about anthrax to the community. This includes the cause of the disease, symptoms, initial observations, and self-protection measures. If any animals are found dead or abnormally sick, they should be promptly reported to the local Livestock Office or relevant authorities. Avoid touching or skinning suspected animal carcasses. If necessary, wear rubber gloves and a mask every time you handle them. Avoid giving animals or animal products suspected of being diseased to other animals for consumption, distribution, sale, or feeding, in order to prevent the spread of the disease. Also, avoid purchasing or consuming meat from uncertain sources. Livestock farmers, such as cattle and buffalo owners, should ensure that their animals receive vaccinations according to the prescribed schedule to prevent disease. If any villagers exhibit symptoms suggestive of anthrax, they should seek medical attention immediately for proper treatment.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

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

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