

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

July 13 - 19, 2023

WEEKLY EVENTS

- The Department of Livestock Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, through the Animal Quarantine Station at Suvarnabhumi Airport, Veterinary Health Surveillance Division, seized smuggled pork intestines that were brought into the country illegally. This operation was in accordance with the measures outlined by the Department of Livestock. Importing animals or animal carcasses without proper permits is considered a violation under Article 31 of the Animal Epidemics Act 2015. According to Article 68 of the same act, the penalty for such violation includes imprisonment for up to two years or a fine not exceeding 200,000 baht or both. These measures are being implemented to prevent the spread of African swine fever virus in pigs. If an outbreak occurs in the country, it could cause significant damage to Thailand's pig farming industry. Therefore, the Department of Livestock Development is conducting vigilant inspections and stringent checks to mitigate this risk.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) confirmed that "aspartame," which is a sweetening agent used as a sugar substitute, remains safe for consumption. This confirmation comes after a thorough examination and safety assessment of the use of aspartame in the dietary patterns of the Thai population, based on international standards and adjusted conditions to ensure the safety for Thai consumers. The FDA has also conducted random checks on foods containing aspartame as a sweetening agent since 2020 and has not identified any issues. The FDA stated that consumers can be assured that aspartame, which is permitted and regulated by the FDA, complies with the Ministry of Public Health's regulations, and remains safe for consumption.

ELIMINATE MOSQUITO LARVAE TO PREVENT ZIKA VIRUS INFECTION

During the rainy season, stagnant water accumulates in containers around households and the community, providing favorable breeding grounds for mosquito larvae, including those carrying various diseases. One of these diseases is Zika. Thailand continues to experience sustained Zika virus outbreaks. Data from 2020 – 2022 reflect that there were 239, 61, and 24 annual Zika cases respectively.

Currently, there is an increasing trend in 2023. According to data from the Department of Disease Control, between January 1, 2023 and July 12 there have been 97 Zika cases. Among these cases, 5 have been pregnant women. Zika cases tend to increase during the rainy season, according to the disease surveillance report from the Department of Disease Control. During the week of July 10-16, 2023 there were 12 reported cases. The provinces with the highest number of cases during that week were Phetchabun with 7 cases, followed by Surat Thani with 2 cases. Additionally, there were cases in Phitsanulok, Trat, and Chanthaburi. Most cases of this disease are not severe, with symptoms like dengue fever, including fever, red eyes, joint pain, and a red rash on the body. Without complications, the disease typically resolves within 7 days.

There is no specific medication or vaccine targeting Zika virus infection. The main treatment approach is symptom-based. Special attention should be given to pregnant women, due to the risk of severe complications in the newborn, such as microcephaly and neurological issues. Thus, pregnant women experiencing symptoms such as fever, a rash, or red eyes should promptly consult a doctor. The best preventive measure is to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds and control mosquito populations in the environment, reducing the risk of Zika virus infection.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Local administrative units, provincial health departments, and local organizations should provide updates on the current situation of the ongoing Zika virus infection outbreak in various provinces. Collaborative efforts are being made to inform the residents about the causes, symptoms, and preliminary prevention measures of this disease. Zika virus, which is transmitted primarily by mosquitoes, usually presents mild symptoms similar to dengue fever and is often self-limiting. However, if contracted during pregnancy, special precautions are needed due to potential risks to the fetus, as mentioned earlier.

The most effective preventive measure is to avoid mosquito bites. This includes wearing loose-fitted clothing, using mosquito repellents, sleeping under mosquito nets, and using mosquito-repellent sprays or patches. Improving the ventilation within homes and effectively managing mosquito breeding grounds in both the community and household environments are also crucial preventive steps. Consistently and correctly eliminating mosquito breeding sites is especially important, as it significantly reduces the risk of Zika virus infection.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

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

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