

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

July 20 - 26, 2023

WEEKLY EVENTS

- The Ministry of Health of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has initiated the Global Mosquito Population Control project, involving the introduction of the *Wolbachia* bacteria into mosquito populations and releasing them into the environment. In the future, it is expected that when these mosquitoes mate with others already in the environment, the ones carrying the Zika virus and dengue fever will become sterile. The project takes 20 weeks to complete and is currently in its 13th week of implementation in 30 villages in the capital city of Vientiane and Xayaburi district. Although concrete evidence linking *Wolbachia*-infected mosquitoes to a reduction in dengue fever cases is not yet confirmed, the development organization leading this initiative expects to see results within a year. If successful, the project will expand its operations to other areas across the country.
- From July 24th to 27th, 2023, the Department of Livestock Development of Thailand, under the Bureau of Disease Control and Veterinary Services, organized a Thai-Lao cooperation project for surveillance, control, and prevention of avian influenza. Dr. Supawan Kaeovilai, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Livestock and Fisheries of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, was honored to participate in this meeting. The event received support from the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) as guest speakers. The participants included officials from the Department of Livestock Development of Thailand, the Department of Livestock and Fisheries of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and relevant authorities from both countries, totaling 150 individuals. The objective of the meeting was to prepare for the implementation of a comprehensive avian influenza surveillance program, ensuring readiness for surveillance and control activities.

MELIOIDOSIS POSES A LIFE-THREATENING RISK

The Department of Disease Control's data report from July 17 - 23, 2023 indicated that deaths due to melioidosis have been reported in various provinces. Phitsanulok, Surat Thani, Chiang Rai, Saraburi, and Phrae each reported one fatal case. From January 1 to July 17, 2023, there have been a total of 1,885 reported cases and 24 deaths. The age group most affected has been those aged over 65, followed by those 55-64 and 45-54 years old. The most commonly affected occupation has been farmers.

Melioidosis is caused by the bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei*. It is more prevalent during the rainy season, particularly in areas with flooding or stagnant water. The bacteria can enter the body through open wounds, inhalation of contaminated dust or water, and ingestion of contaminated food or water. The incubation period of the disease is around 1-21 days, but it is possible to be up to a few years. General symptoms include fever and skin sores or abscesses, particularly in the neck or armpit lymph nodes. In severe cases, the infection can spread to internal organs such as the lungs, liver, spleen, and kidneys, and even cause septicemia.

The severity of the disease depends on the patient's immune system and the bacterial load. Those at higher risk include individuals who directly handle soil and water in their occupations, such as farmers and fishermen. People with underlying conditions like diabetes, chronic kidney disease, and thalassemia are at a higher risk of complications and death. The disease often begins with fever, similar to common illnesses, making diagnosis challenging. Confirmation usually requires laboratory tests. Therefore, if unusual symptoms along with risky behaviors and underlying health conditions are present, it is advisable to seek medical attention promptly.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Officials from the Department of the Interior and health authorities should collaborate to educate residents about melioidosis including the causes, modes of transmission, early symptom recognition, and self-protection measures. To prevent contracting the disease, individuals are advised to avoid wading through floodwaters or muddy areas, and avoid direct contact with soil and water. If necessary, wearing boots, rubber gloves, long pants, or waterproof clothing is recommended. After touching soil and water, it is important to clean the body immediately with soap and clean water. Consuming thoroughly cooked food and clean water is advised. People should also avoid exposure to dusty air and being outdoors during heavy rains. People experiencing high fever who have a history of soil and water contact, particularly farmers and individuals with diabetes, should seek medical attention promptly.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY



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

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