

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

December 7 - 13, 2023

WEEKLY EVENTS

- On December 8, 2023, the Director of the Office of International Cooperation at the Department of Disease Control, was invited by the Asian Development Bank to present lessons learned from the past and challenges in the future regarding equity during the pandemic. The meeting's theme was "COVID-19 Vaccination and Beyond: Lessons from Southeast Asia." The presentation highlighted Thailand's efforts in providing more than 6 million doses of COVID-19 vaccinations to both foreign nationals and migrant workers. The foreign nationalities with the highest vaccine coverage in Thailand were Myanmar, followed by Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. However, challenges remain, especially among certain groups of migrant workers who have not received vaccines according to criteria due to issues such as inadequate documentation, changes in workplace and residence, and missing documents. Some individuals also express concerns about vaccine side effects and communication issues. Currently, the Department of Disease Control, in collaboration with the Thai Red Cross Society and the National Electronics and Computer Technology Center, is expanding the use of identity verification technology for individuals without proper identification. This involves iris scan and facial recognition technology to verify identification and address barriers to accessing healthcare services for migrant workers. This technology aims to enhance healthcare service delivery and covers necessary vaccinations and long-term healthcare.

THE **RABIES** SITUATION IN ASEAN AND THAILAND

Rabies is a severe and life-threatening disease. Without vaccination, almost every infected patient will succumb to it once symptoms onset. In Thailand, awareness campaigns particularly on "World Rabies Day" have been organized annually to educate the public about the dangers of rabies. These initiatives have been ongoing, yet fatalities due to rabies continue to occur each year. According to the Division of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control, fatalities have been reported consistently from 2018 to 2023. From January 1 to October 20, 2023, there have been five reported deaths due to rabies. The Office of Disease Control and Prevention Region 12 reported six deaths from 2018 to 2023. These cases have been linked to individuals having been bitten by their own dogs or stray dogs, and none of the deceased received post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) after the bites. In the ASEAN region, data from the ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Center (ABVC) from January 1 to December 2, 2023, revealed a total of 484 confirmed rabies deaths. The Philippines reported the highest number of cases at 324, followed by Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Thailand, with 109, 34, 9, and 5 cases, respectively. Singapore and Brunei declared themselves rabies-free in 2010 and 2011, respectively. Malaysia initially declared itself rabies-free but had to revise its status in 2017 due to a reported case in 2016. Malaysia has since been adjusting its strategies and preparedness by enhancing disease surveillance. Myanmar has observed a decreasing trend in rabies cases since 2011. However, rabies remains a significant public health concern in the ASEAN region, necessitating continuous cross-cutting efforts to address the issue. Collaboration from multiple stakeholders, including public engagement, is crucial to achieving Thailand's goal of being rabies-free by 2025.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

The provincial authorities should inform the district livestock and public health offices to collaborate in raising awareness among the community about the dangers of rabies. This includes providing information on the cause of rabies, observing signs of animals that may be infected, and educating the public on how to protect themselves from dog bites. Additionally, basic first aid measures to be taken if bitten by a dog should be communicated. It is recommended that organizations responsible for stray dogs cooperate with the district livestock office to effectively manage stray dogs in the area. These collaborative efforts aim to reduce the risk of rabies transmission, and involve actions such as administering rabies vaccinations, neutering stray dogs, and conducting public awareness campaigns. Furthermore, the local community is encouraged to bring their pets, such as dogs and cats for annual rabies vaccinations. Mobile vaccination units may be organized for the convenience of residents in the communities. For individuals, self-protection is advised. If bitten or scratched by a dog or cat with an unknown vaccination history, it is crucial to promptly clean the wound with clean water and seek medical attention immediately for rabies vaccination at the nearest healthcare facility.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY



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

Office of International Cooperation, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand
Supported by the Thailand MOPH - US CDC Collaboration on Public Health

CONTACT
oic.ddc@gmail.com
02-5903832
www.ddc.go.th/oic

Sources

- <https://ddc.moph.go.th/odpc12/news.php?news=39071&deptcode=odpc12>
- https://ddc.moph.go.th/oic/news.php?news=39119&deptcode=oic&news_views=2381
- ASEAN Biodiaspora Virtual Center (ABVC) in collaboration with Bluedot Inc.
- Image courtesy of: <https://www.komchadluek.net/kom-lifestyle/364885>