

# REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

November 30 - December 6, 2023

## WEEKLY EVENTS

- On December 4, 2023, the Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, collaborated with various sectors and networks to conduct health screening and disease prevention and control for migrant workers. The activities included screening for patients for tuberculosis, administering influenza vaccines, utilizing facial recognition technology, and registering health care follow-ups at Wat Myanmar, Soi Bang Khun Thian 14, Samae Dam, Bang Khun Thian, Bangkok. The health screening services provided to migrant workers covered checking for conditions such as high blood pressure, hypertension, and obesity. Screening for tuberculosis was conducted using chest X-rays, and medications for preventing lymphatic filariasis were distributed. A total of 497 individuals received services, and their identity information was recorded using iris scan and facial recognition and data collection systems supported by the Thailand Red Cross Society and the National Electronics and Computer Technology Center. The aim was to expand access to public health services for migrant workers by providing One Stop Services and enhancing the efficiency of disease surveillance, prevention, and control for potential health risks among migrant workers in Thailand.

## EATING RAW PORK POSES A RISK OF *STREPTOCOCCUS SUIIS*

Based on recent reports, there have been four new cases of *Streptococcus suis* infection in Mae Sariang District, Mae Hong Son Province, from February to November 2023. In Thailand, there is an average of 200-350 *Streptococcus suis* infections detected every year and the mortality rate has increased to 5-10%. Over the past 10 years, there has not been a noticeable decreasing trend in the number of infections. The reported number of infected individuals may even be lower than the actual number due to the difficulty of testing for the causative agent, *Streptococcus suis*, and the challenging nature of identifying severe strains. Most healthcare facilities, especially smaller ones, may not be equipped to handle these tests.

According to the Division of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control, between January 1 and November 27, 2023, there were 550 cases of *Streptococcus suis* infection with 29 fatalities. The age group most affected included people over 65 years old, accounting for 36%, followed by the age groups of 55-64 years (29%) and 45-54 years (21%). The bacterium, *Streptococcus suis*, resides in the respiratory tract and blood of infected pigs. It can be transmitted in two ways: consumption of raw or undercooked pork and direct contact with infected pigs. The infection can occur through wounds, scratches on the body, and via mucous membranes. Upon ingestion of undercooked or raw pork or contact with the blood of an infected pig, symptoms typically appear 3-5 days later and include high fever, severe headaches, dizziness, vomiting, stiff neck, loss of hearing, diarrhea, and muscle pain. Given the upcoming holiday season, where people will be returning to their hometowns and celebrating together, caution should be exercised regarding food preparation and consumption. It is advisable to avoid consuming raw or undercooked pork, such as raw pork salad (larb) and raw pork liver, which involves mixing raw pig blood, as well as uncooked grilling, to minimize the risk of infection and the occurrence of *Streptococcus suis*.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

The Provincial Public Health Offices should coordinate with the local livestock offices to jointly publicize and inform local residents about the causes of *Streptococcus suis*, the dangers associated with the disease, prevention measures, initial symptoms to observe, and the at-risk groups. This includes individuals who regularly consume raw or undercooked food and those involved in pig farming, pig processing, and related occupations. People should avoid buying pork from untrustworthy sources. People involved in pig farming or pork trading should wear masks, gloves, and goggles when handling pig meat to prevent the transmission of the disease. After completing their work, it is recommended to take a thorough body shower. Relevant personnel should conduct public relations, distributing informational pamphlets to households, and engage in informal discussions before the upcoming New Year festival to remind the public to avoid risky consumption behaviors related to *Streptococcus suis*. If someone experiences symptoms consistent with *Streptococcus suis*, they should promptly seek medical attention, providing details about their risk history. This will ensure prompt and accurate treatment, reducing the risk of developing symptoms and potential fatalities.

## 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

[oiic.ddc@gmail.com](mailto:oiic.ddc@gmail.com)

02-5903832

[www.ddc.go.th/oiic](http://www.ddc.go.th/oiic)

## Sources

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