

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

January 25 - 31, 2024

WEEKLY EVENTS

- In the "Summary of the Diphtheria Situation in Thailand" from the Division of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control, here has been an upward trend of diphtheria cases in Thailand from January 1, 2023 to January 26, 2024. There has been a reported increase in the number of cases since August 2023, and total cases remain high. The majority of the outbreak is concentrated in the southern border provinces, with Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat having the highest number of cases respectively. Most of the affected individuals are children under 5 years old. Among this group, over 70% have not received the diphtheria vaccine, have an unknown vaccination history, or have not completed the vaccination course according to national standards. During this period, there have been seven confirmed diphtheria-related deaths, with the age range being between 18 days and 3 months. The majority of the deceased were below the vaccination eligibility age (below 2 months). Thailand still faces a risk of diphtheria outbreaks, especially in areas with low vaccine coverage, particularly below the standard threshold (DTP3 at 90%). The situation underscores the importance of vaccination campaigns to improve coverage and reduce the risk of diphtheria outbreaks in various regions of Thailand.
- On January 27, 2024, a report from the ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre confirmed that there were three cases of rabies in the state of Sarawak, Malaysia. Two patients, a 39-year-old female and a 42-year-old male, resided in the city of Kuching. The third patient, a 61-year-old male, resided in the Bintulu district of Sarawak. Last year, the female patient was bitten by a stray dog, while both male patients were bitten by pet dogs and cats. None of the three patients had received rabies vaccinations. Currently, all three patients are receiving treatment at a hospital in the state of Sarawak.

ALERT BUT NOT ALARMED FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA

Blue Dot Alert reported on the avian influenza situation in Cambodia. Two avian influenza cases were identified, both in males. The first patient, aged 3, resides in Preah Vihear Province in the southeast of Cambodia, while the second patient, aged 69, lives in Kampong Thom Province in the northwest. Laboratory tests conducted by the National Institute of Public Health confirmed that both patients were infected with H5N1 avian influenza virus, making them the first cases in the country in 2024. Currently, both patients are in hospitals receiving treatment, and investigations are underway to identify the sources of infection and trace contacts to control further spread in the community.

The initial investigations revealed that in the villages of both patients, there were a large number of chickens that died from unknown causes. About 10 days after the poultry deaths, the patients began exhibiting symptoms of avian influenza, such as fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, fatigue, etc. Throughout 2023, Cambodia experienced a significant number of poultry deaths, with reports of disease outbreaks in various areas. This increased the risk of exposure among the population, especially among those who had close contact with poultry. The surrounding environment may have been contaminated with virus, and the early symptoms of the disease resemble those of severe respiratory infections, especially of H5N1 infection.

The initial diagnosis of the avian influenza is challenging during the early stages of infection. Therefore, if people experience abnormal respiratory system symptoms or flu-like symptoms, it is advisable to consult a doctor and provide a detailed history, such as contact with poultry, information about poultry deaths in the community, or presence of poultry farming near the residence, among other details. Healthcare personnel encountering patients with respiratory symptoms should inquire about the aforementioned risk factors to ensure appropriate treatment and help reduce the risk of the disease spreading widely.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

The local authorities, Department of Livestock Development, and Department of Disease Control should coordinate regarding the avian influenza situation found in Cambodia to inform local residents about the situation. If any abnormalities are observed in the area, such as unexplained poultry deaths, they are advised to report to the village head, local administrative organizations, or the district livestock office. Importantly, it is prohibited to consume poultry that have died from unknown causes, and these carcasses should be properly buried. Personal hygiene practices, such as consuming thoroughly cooked food, wearing masks, and handwashing before meals, are recommended to prevent the spread of the disease.

Due to the initial symptoms of avian influenza being similar to those of common influenza, residents are urged to report any cases where individuals in the area exhibit symptoms similar to the flu, especially if they have a history of contact with poultry, live in close proximity to environments with poultry, or reside near areas where poultry have experienced abnormal deaths within the past 7-14 days before symptoms appeared. In such cases, it is essential to inform local health authorities and veterinary officials promptly. Healthcare personnel in medical facilities identifying patients with severe influenza should inquire about the risk factors in the patient's history.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

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

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Sources

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