

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

February 1 - 7, 2024

WEEKLY EVENTS

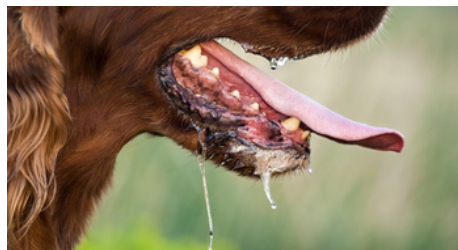
- On January 30-31, 2024, the Department of Disease Control, in collaboration with relevant central, regional, and local stakeholders, organized a meeting and table top exercise to prepare response plans for rabies at the border area of Sadao, Thailand and Bukit Kayu Hitam, Kedah State, Malaysia. The meeting took place near the Sadao-Bukit Kayu Hitam Border Checkpoint. Approximately 100 participants attended the meeting. During the meeting, there was an exchange of information on various aspects of rabies prevention, disease control, medical management, prevention and control of diseases in animals, and border management. The insights gained from this simulation exercise can be used to develop strategies for exchanging information between the Sadao and Bukit Kayu Hitam checkpoints. This aims to effectively respond to rabies and develop operational strategies for managing diseases and other health challenges that pose a common threat to the two border areas.
- On January 28, 2024, the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China reported to the World Health Organization that they had identified a confirmed human case of avian influenza A (H10N5). The infected individual, who was the first case in China and in the world, was a 63-year-old female farmer residing in Xuancheng Prefecture, Anhui Province. She fell ill on November 30 and succumbed to the illness on December 16, 2023. Currently, the disease investigation is ongoing, and no additional cases have been identified. Laboratory testing of samples from seven stored chicken specimens in the freezer revealed positive results for avian influenza A (H10N5) virus in two specimens.

RABIES: A PREVENTABLE DANGER

The outbreak investigation report by the Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health from January 29 to February 4, 2024, stated that the Veterinary Research and Development Center for Northeastern Thailand, located in Khon Kaen Province, confirmed the presence of rabies virus in the heads of dogs that had previously been bitten by rabid dogs. The bitten dogs were three months old and resided in Srisong Rak sub-district, Mueang district, Loei province. Subsequently, one of the bitten dogs died. In the past three weeks, samples from the heads of three dogs were confirmed to be positive for rabies virus. Two of the dogs had owners, and one was a stray dog.

Rabies is a life-threatening disease if people infected are not immediately vaccinated after infection. Patients continue to die from rabies despite continuous awareness campaigns in Thailand to educate the public about the dangers of rabies. From 2018 to 2023, the Department of Epidemiology reported that there was an average of three deaths per year with the highest number of rabies deaths in 2018 (17 deaths). Deaths have been consistently reported each year.

Rabies can affect all mammals, including dogs, cats, cattle, buffaloes, monkeys, and civets. In Thailand, dogs are the most reported animals infected with rabies. Rabies is transmitted to humans through bites, licks, saliva splashes into the eyes, mouth, or wounds. The virus multiplies at the bite site, and after several weeks to months, the person may begin to show symptoms. The severity and speed of onset depend on the amount of virus received and the location of the wound. If the wound is near the brain, the virus enters the central nervous system or the brain quickly, leading to death. Emphasis is placed on pets, especially dogs and cats kept in households or even stray dogs, to receive annual rabies vaccinations. If anyone is bitten by a dog, cat, monkey, or other animals, especially animals with an unknown vaccination history, it is essential to clean the affected area and promptly seek medical attention to reduce the risk of death.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

The local public health and livestock offices should collaborate to disseminate information to the public about the dangers of rabies, including the cause, observing of suspected animals, and self-protection practices against dog bites. Additionally, the communication should cover basic first aid actions when bitten by a dog. The agencies responsible for stray dogs should cooperate with the district livestock office to manage stray dogs in the area, reducing the risk of rabies. This may involve actions such as administering rabies vaccines and sterilizing stray dogs. Furthermore, public awareness campaigns should encourage pet owners to bring their animals, such as dogs and cats, for annual rabies vaccinations. Mobile units may be organized to provide vaccination services in various communities for convenience and to encourage community participation. For self-protection, individuals should promptly wash wounds with clean water and seek medical attention if bitten by a dog or cat with an unclear vaccination history. This ensures timely administration of rabies vaccines in 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
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CONTACT
oic.ddc@gmail.com
02-5903832
www.ddc.go.th/oic

Sources

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- Information courtesy of: The International Health Regulations (IHR) Coordination Group, under the Division of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, which serves as the National Focal Point for Health Regulations (IHR-NFP) in Thailand.
- Image courtesy of: <https://www.siphhospital.com/th/news/article/share/579>
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