

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

October 3 - 9, 2024

## STREPTOCOCCUS SUIIS:

### THREAT FROM CONSUMING RAW PORK

Information from the ASEAN Biodiaspora Virtual Center (October 5-7, 2024) reported cases of *Streptococcus suis* infection (often referred to as “deafness fever”), in northeastern Thailand. This aligns with data from the Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, which recorded cases and deaths due to the disease in four provinces of lower northeastern Thailand: Nakhon Ratchasima, Buriram, Surin, and Chaiyaphum. From January 7 to September 3, 2024, there were 149 cases and 12 deaths reported. According to the Division of Epidemiology, between January 1 and October 6, 2024, there were 783 cases and 45 deaths nationwide, surpassing last year’s total, which saw 605 cases and 34 deaths in 2023. The age groups most affected are those over 65, followed by those aged 55-64, and 45-54, respectively.

*Streptococcus suis* is transmitted to humans primarily through the consumption of undercooked pork and pig blood. The bacteria can also enter through wounds or mucous membranes in the mouth and nose, especially in people working closely with pigs, such as farm and slaughterhouse workers. Other high-risk groups include chronic alcohol users and individuals with underlying health conditions, such as diabetes, kidney disease, cancer, heart disease, and those who have had their spleen removed.

Symptoms typically appear 3-5 days after infection and include fever, muscle aches, headaches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, joint pain, encephalitis, altered mental state, drowsiness, neck stiffness, seizures, and hearing loss, which may lead to permanent deafness. A severe complication is sudden hearing loss, which often follows meningitis. Inflammation can spread from the cerebrospinal fluid to the inner ear, affecting hearing organs and leading to deafness, typically in both ears.

The Department of Disease Control advises the public to purchase pork only from reputable sources and consume only thoroughly cooked pork, offal, and blood. Separate utensils should be used for raw and cooked pork. Avoid pork with a strong smell or dark color, and do not touch raw pork or blood with bare hands. Any open wounds should be covered with a bandage, and hands should be washed after handling pork. Self-protection is the best approach, especially for the elderly and those with underlying health conditions, to reduce the risk of death from this disease.



### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Officials have informed subdistrict health volunteers to coordinate with local public health and livestock officers to inform residents about the causes of *Streptococcus suis*, its dangers, self-protection measures, and initial symptoms to watch for. High-risk groups, such as chronic alcohol drinkers, those who frequently consume undercooked or raw food, and individuals working in pig farming or pork processing, should be especially cautious. People are advised not to purchase pork from unknown sources. Those involved in pig farming, pork sales, or butchering should wear masks, gloves, and protective eyewear during these activities to prevent infection. After work, they should thoroughly shower and clean themselves.

Before major festivals, when communal dining and gatherings are common, officials should distribute informational leaflets or make informal visits to remind residents to avoid high-risk consumption behaviors. If anyone experiences symptoms consistent with *Streptococcus suis* infection, they should see a doctor immediately and provide their exposure history to ensure prompt and accurate treatment, reducing the risk of hearing loss and mortality.

## WEEKLY EVENTS

- On October 2, 2024, multiple news outlets reported the temporary closure of Hamburg’s central train station in Germany after two individuals displayed flu-like symptoms potentially linked to the Marburg virus outbreak. One of the patients, a 26-year-old German male medical student, had recently traveled to Rwanda and came into contact with a patient who was later diagnosed with the Marburg virus. Information about the other patient remains unclear. Rwanda reported an outbreak of the Marburg virus on September 27, 2024, with a notable number of cases among healthcare workers. As of October 1, 2024, there were 29 reported cases and 11 deaths in Rwanda. On October 3, the Hamburg University Medical Center officially confirmed that both patients tested negative for the Marburg virus. Nevertheless, both individuals remain in isolation for observation until the end of the 21-day incubation period.
- On October 5, 2024, Bluedot Event Alerts reported a case of avian influenza, as confirmed by the California Department of Public Health in the United States. This marks the third confirmed case of avian influenza, with laboratory results verified locally. The previous two cases had no known connection, but all patients had worked on dairy farms where avian influenza outbreaks occurred. The latest patient exhibited symptoms of conjunctivitis, including red eyes and eye pain. Authorities have provided treatment and instructed the patient to isolate to prevent further spread. The California Department of Public Health has sent samples to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for additional laboratory confirmation.

## 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

[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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