

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

November 28 - December 4, 2024

## WEEKLY EVENTS

- On December 4, 2024, the UK Health Security Agency purchased over 5 million doses of the H5 avian influenza vaccine to prepare for potential future outbreaks. The vaccine was developed from current H5 strains as part of a long-term pandemic preparedness plan. Additionally, other countries such as the United States, the European Union, and Japan have procured and stockpiled H5 avian influenza vaccines as part of their preparedness efforts.
- On December 2, 2024, the Division of Epidemiology reported there have been 707,717 cases of diarrhea nationwide since January 2024, with no fatalities. The most common setting of outbreaks were schools. The public is advised to follow food safety practices to prevent outbreaks, particularly during the winter season when norovirus and rotavirus thrive and can cause diarrhea in people of all age groups. Young children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable due to their weaker immune systems.
- On November 29, 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) urged countries to strengthen surveillance for avian influenza after cases of H5N1 were reported in humans. The number of H5N1 cases in humans worldwide has been increasing. Although the numbers are still relatively low, there has been a consistent upward trend in recent years. WHO emphasized monitoring wild birds, farmed poultry, and other at-risk animals, including swine and cattle, to prevent potential outbreaks.

## INFLUENZA: A DISEASE THAT COMES WITH THE RAINY AND WINTER SEASONS

Influenza is a respiratory infection that commonly occurs during the rainy and winter seasons. The symptoms range from mild to severe and can be fatal, especially for high-risk groups. According to the Week 48 Surveillance Report from the Department of Disease Control (November 25 – December 2, 2024), there was an outbreak of influenza reported in a school in Bangkok. A significant number of students, primarily from Grades 4 to 7, exhibited symptoms consistent with influenza. Health officials screened 300 students, identifying 65 cases of Influenza A, seven of Influenza B, three of COVID-19, and 15 of RSV. Further investigations are ongoing.

Epidemiological data as of Week 46 (November 17–23, 2024) reported by the Division of Epidemiology indicated that from January 1 to November 23, 2024, there were 624,475 influenza cases and 47 deaths in Thailand. The highest risk groups were children aged 0–4 years, followed by those aged 5–14 years and 15–24 years, predominantly school-aged individuals. Influenza incidence declined in 2020–2021, coinciding with strict COVID-19 prevention measures, including mask-wearing and stringent screening in at-risk areas. As COVID-19 restrictions eased, influenza re-emerged as a concern from 2022 onwards. Annual influenza vaccination is crucial, as the virus undergoes constant strain changes, necessitating updated vaccines to maintain adequate immunity. The Department of Disease Control and the National Health Security Office (NHSO) provide free influenza vaccinations to high-risk groups to mitigate community transmission.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Authorities should collaborate with public health officials and local administrative organizations to educate communities about influenza symptoms, transmission, and basic prevention methods, especially in high-risk settings like schools, daycare centers, military camps, and correctional facilities. They should encourage households to vaccinate high-risk individuals, including the elderly and children aged 6 months to 2 years. Schools should coordinate with health officials to ensure students receive annual vaccinations. It is important to promote the benefits of vaccination and adherence to prevention guidelines in educational and community settings.

## 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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- Information courtesy of: Influenza Situation Report, Thailand 2024, Week 46 (17 - 23 November 2024), Communicable Disease Epidemiology Surveillance System Development Group, Division of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health
- Information courtesy of: Dr. Soawapak Hinjoy, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, as of 4 Dec 2024
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