



Press Releases

Surveillance Stepped up in Province where Cambodia's First Human Avian Influenza Case Was Detected

9 February 2005

Phnom Penh -- Officials from the Ministry of Health of Cambodia and the World Health Organization (WHO) have stepped up surveillance in Kampot Province, the scene of Cambodia's first human case of avian influenza. Meanwhile, Cambodian officials have begun travelling from village to village in the region, warning about the dangers of infected poultry, while a local radio station has been making hourly broadcasts on the need to take precautions. People have been told they should avoid unnecessary contact with infected poultry, especially de-feathering or preparing sick birds for consumption in an area with recent chicken deaths.

Health centers in Kampot Province are now using a common case definition for suspected avian influenza patients and have been advised to alert the authorities about any suspect cases.

The Cambodian Ministry of Health confirmed over the weekend that a 25-year-old woman from Kampot Province who died in Viet Nam on 30 January 2005 was positive for influenza A/H5. The woman's 14-year-old brother died after experiencing respiratory symptoms and is suspected to have been infected with avian influenza. However, no diagnostic samples were collected before his cremation. No other people, including the woman's family and close contacts, have so far tested positive. All of the case's close contacts will remain under observation until 14 February 2005, when two incubation periods will have passed.

In order to clarify how the woman became infected, additional laboratory and epidemiological investigations are ongoing in collaboration with the Pasteur Institute, Phnom Penh, the Cambodian Ministry of Agriculture, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). At this stage, there is no evidence of human-to-human transmission.

"WHO is encouraged by Cambodia's response," said Dr Jim Tulloch, WHO's Representative in Cambodia. "Increased efforts to educate the public about avian influenza will be crucial in the detection and control of any future outbreak. There is no way to accurately predict what lies ahead, but by putting emphasis on surveillance, WHO and the Cambodian government are investing in the best response to any potential outbreak: preparedness."

WHO continues to work closely with the Cambodian Government and partners, including the FAO, to monitor the situation.

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- ▶ **COMBATING COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**
- ▶ **BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES & POPULATIONS**
- ▶ **HEALTH SECTOR DEVELOPMENT**
- ▶ **REACHING OUT**