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Avian influenza outbreaks in South Korea, Vietnam and Japan

Purpose

This note sets out the information available to us concerning the current H5 avian influenza outbreaks in South Korea, Vietnam and Japan.

Avian Influenza Outbreak in South Korea

2. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) reported to the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) on 12 December 2003 that an H5 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreak occurred in a chicken farm in Chungcheong-buk-do province, about 80 km south east of Seoul. According to epidemiological investigation, the avian flu virus might have come from migratory birds. Many migratory birds inhabited in ponds near the index farm.

3. The strategy being used by South Korea to control the outbreak includes (i) a stamping out policy of infected farms; (ii) quarantine measures on suspected farms; and (iii) movement restrictions within 10 km radius of affected farm. Vaccination is not adopted.

4. According to the information available to us, infection had been confirmed at 16 farms by mid January 2004, and about 16 farms were under investigation. At one case, the disease was also found in a quail farm. According to media reports by end December 2003, more than 1.2 million birds had been killed to contain the disease and the MFA was

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planning to destroy 2.5 million chickens and 150 000 ducks to stop the outbreak.

5. No human cases have been reported so far in connection with the South Korean outbreak.

6. We do not import any live poultry and birds from South Korea and the volume of poultry products imported from South Korea to Hong Kong is insignificant. In the first ten months of 2003, Hong Kong only imported about 539 tonnes of such products from South Korea, accounting for less than 1% of the total volume of poultry meat imported to Hong Kong.

Avian influenza outbreak in Vietnam

7. The Department of Animal Health of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam reported to the OIE on 8 January 2004 that an H5 HPAI outbreak occurred in three chicken farms in the Long An Province and the Tien Giang Province, both in the Southern part of the country. The estimated date of first infection was reported to be 27 December 2003. It was reported that 40,000 birds had died and 30,000 birds had been destroyed.

8. The strategy being used by Vietnam to control the outbreak includes (i) control of wildlife reservoirs of avian influenza viruses; (ii) quarantine restrictions; (iii) movement control of poultry from the

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affected provinces; (iv) destruction and disposal of dead and affected birds; and (v) screening of poultry.

9. On 13 January 2004, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that it had received laboratory confirmation of three cases of H5N1 avian influenza in humans in the Hanoi region of Vietnam. The samples came from two children and one adult who have since died. Since October 2003, a total of 14 cases of severe respiratory disease have been identified in Hanoi and surrounding provinces. Thirteen of these cases are in children and one in an adult. To date, 11 of these children and the adult have died. However, there is so far no evidence that all these cases are caused by avian influenza. Some of the cases have involved family members, but investigators are exploring the possibility that those who fell ill may have been exposed to a common source in poultry. Four of the five families that have so far been interviewed reportedly recalled chickens dying in their villages. According to WHO, the evidence to date suggests that there is no sign of human-to-human transmission.

10. There have been no imports of live poultry since 2000 and poultry meat from Vietnam into Hong Kong in the past two years.

Avian influenza outbreak in Japan

11. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan reported to the OIE on 12 January 2004 that an H5 HPAI outbreak occurred in one layer flock in a farm in Yamaguchi Prefecture. It was

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reported that about 6,000 chickens were found dead on the farm and another 30,000 chickens on the farm were killed.

12. The strategy being used by Japan to control the outbreak includes (i) a stamping out policy of the affected farm; (ii) movement control of poultry within the country; and (iii) screening of poultry.

13. In the first ten months of 2003, about 3,000 tonnes of poultry meat were imported from Japan accounting for less than 1% of the total volume of poultry meat imported to Hong Kong. The only imports of live birds from Japan in the past 12 months were two birds imported to a zoo in December. Both birds have completed their post arrival quarantine and are healthy.

14. No human cases have been reported so far in connection with the Japanese outbreak.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
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