

**Supplementary information provided by the Administration
in response to members' requests raised at previous meetings of
the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

Members' requests raised at the Panel meeting on 8 April 2008

- Information on the past notification records of human avian influenza cases on the Mainland in respect the date of the onset of symptoms, the date of receipt of notification of suspected cases and the date of notification of the confirmation of the cases

The Administration's response -

There were 8 human cases of avian influenza occurring in the Mainland with onset of symptoms occurring between January 2007 and April 2008. Of these, the time duration between disease onset and confirmation was within 14 days in 7 of the cases. In the remaining case, the time duration between disease onset and confirmation was 29 days.

The above case with 29 days between disease onset and confirmation was a human H5N1 case which took place in the worst snow-stricken province of Hunan, where prolonged low temperatures, icy rain and heavy snow have caused blackouts and traffic chaos therein in early 2008.

The Department of Health usually receives notification report of human avian influenza cases within the same day as the confirmatory report is published by the Mainland health authority and sent to the World Health Organization (WHO).

WHO recommends that any specimens with a positive result using testing approaches, including rapid antigen detection, virus culture and Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) for influenza A virus and suspected of avian influenza infection should be further tested and verified by a designated WHO H5 Reference Laboratory, which corresponds to the Virology Institute of Chinese CDC in Beijing.

A sequence of events need to take place for confirmation of a human case of avian influenza, starting with onset of symptoms, visit to healthcare provider, clinical suspicion of avian influenza, taking of samples, processing of samples, production of preliminary laboratory test result, and finally verification of laboratory test result at a second H5 Reference Laboratory. Each of these events takes time. The duration of which is variable and depends on the health infrastructure of the area where the avian influenza case occurs.