AVA'S EXERCISE TO TEST OPERATIONAL READINESS TO DEAL WITH A BIRD FLU OUTBREAK A SUCCESS

The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority's (AVA) sixth operational exercise to test our emergency preparedness in responding to an outbreak of bird flu was successfully conducted on 22 Mar 2012.

2   Code-named Exercise Gallus VI, the exercise involved 200 AVA personnel and was held at AVA's Veterinary Public Health Centre, as well as at a local poultry farm.

3   The key objectives of the exercise were met. We ascertained that our systems continue to be robust and efficient. The recall and activation process was smooth, with emergency response staff involved responding promptly when activated.

4   The logistics teams were able to correctly equip and prepare staff involved in the exercise (e.g. medical screening, donning of personnel protection equipment) in a timely manner.

5   The mock "culling and disposal" process was carried out smoothly. The foam decontamination process introduced during this exercise was also carried out efficiently. The time taken for decontamination was shortened.

6   Our surveillance process conducted at a local poultry farm also familiarised our officers on the activities involved in an unaffected farm should there be a bird flu outbreak.

MEDIA RELEASE

7   AVA's Chief Executive Officer, Ms Tan Poh Hong, stressed the need to remain constantly vigilant of an incursion of bird flu. "Singapore is free from bird flu. But we cannot rest on our laurels. We must constantly review our systems and operations, and test them, to ensure their robustness so that we are prepared to deal with the situation if bird flu hits. Today's exercise was also an opportunity to train new officers. If bird flu reaches our shores, we must be able to react swiftly to mobilize manpower and other resources, to contain and eradicate the disease and ensure public health", said Ms Tan.

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