



EXERCISE TO TEST OPERATIONAL READINESS TO DEAL WITH A BIRD FLU OUTBREAK SUCCESSFUL

The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) successfully conducted an exercise today to test our emergency preparedness to respond to an outbreak of bird flu.

2 This one-day exercise involving relevant agencies (Ministry of Health, Singapore Civil Defence Force, Singapore Police Force, National Environment Agency, SembWaste, Soxal and Public Utilities Board) at a poultry farm in Lim Chu Kang Agrotechnology Park was carried out smoothly according to plan.

Key Observations and Lessons Learnt

3 The main objectives of the exercise were met. All emergency response staff involved in the exercise responded promptly when activated. Our logistics system was generally efficient with minor disruptions.

4 The culling process was physically demanding especially under hot conditions. Some cullers were observed to move their masks and/or goggles which they were supposed to keep on at all times during the culling process. This action can compromise their safety. AVA will conduct further training to ensure that personnel protection procedures are strictly adhered to.

5 The physical endurance of cullers also vary. Although our cullers generally performed well under the difficult conditions, some of them had to stop midway as they were tired. To address this gap, we will be more stringent in the selection of staff as cullers. A reserve pool of staff will also be set up to relieve those who are exhausted.

6 Many cullers were initially unfamiliar with handling chickens. The exercise helped in preparing them to cull chickens on a large scale efficiently. In addition, the exercise reaffirmed that the culling method adopted is humane for the chickens and safe for the cullers. The chickens were rendered unconscious within one minute and they died shortly after. All chickens were safely disposed of.

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7 The decontamination of personnel and vehicles was carried out efficiently and effectively.

8 The various agencies familiarized themselves with the actual ground conditions, logistics and communications systems. This will enhance interagency coordination and thus enable us to respond more speedily in an actual outbreak.

Emergency Preparedness

9 The exercise confirmed that all relevant agencies are operationally ready to deal with a bird flu outbreak. In the event that bird flu is introduced into Singapore, we will be able to act swiftly to contain and eradicate the disease with minimal public health risks.

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