



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OUTBREAK OF ROTAVIRUS GASTROENTERITIS AT OWEN ROAD OVER

Singapore, 8 June 2016 – The joint investigation by the Ministry of Health (MOH), National Environment Agency (NEA), Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) and PUB, Singapore's National Water Agency into the outbreak of gastroenteritis in the Owen Road area has concluded.

2. To date, 180 cases were verified as linked to the outbreak. Of 26 stool samples collected from these cases, 23 had tested positive for Rotavirus. 17 patients were admitted to hospital for treatment. All have since been discharged.

3. The number of gastroenteritis cases seen by clinics in the Owen Road area has significantly declined since the thorough cleaning and disinfection of Pek Kio Market and Food Centre from 25 to 26 May 2016, and is now at baseline levels. There have not been further new admissions to nearby hospitals, Tan Tock Seng Hospital and KK Women's and Children's Hospital, with a link to this outbreak.

4. MOH's investigations showed that this was a community outbreak of Rotavirus in the Owen Road area between 15 and 28 May 2016. However, the investigations did not implicate any specific event or food premises or stall that could be the source of the outbreak. All the food, water and environmental samples collected had tested negative for Rotavirus.

5. As a precautionary measure, NEA had closed Pek Kio Market and Food Centre for an intensive clean up and disinfection from 25 May to 26 May 2016, with the full cooperation and active participation of the stallholders and Tanjong Pagar Town Council's cleaning contractor. NEA officers were also on site during the period of closure to facilitate and advise stallholders on the cleaning of the market and food centre. In view of the tight timeline for the closure, NEA had centrally procured and provided stallholders with chlorine-based, food-grade disinfectants for cleaning of their utensils, food preparation surfaces, walls and floors within their stalls on a once-off basis.

6. NEA will continue to place the centre under close surveillance. Our officers will be checking to ensure that the stallholders observe proper personal hygiene and food handling practices and that the toilets in the centre are properly maintained and cleaned.

7. Some members of the public had earlier speculated that pigeons or rats could have contributed to the outbreak. Although pigeons and rats are unlikely to be the

source of the transmission, they are nonetheless unwelcome pests. The Tanjong Pagar Town Council has intensified treatments at the centre. NEA is also working closely with the Hawkers' Association on the prompt collection and removal of soiled crockery from tables to prevent food remnants from attracting birds to the market.

Public Advisory

8. MOH and NEA would like to remind members of the public to take the necessary precautions, such as washing or sanitising their hands regularly, and using service utensils when sharing food. Persons with gastroenteritis are reminded to practise good hygiene to minimise the risk of spread to other persons.

9. For health related queries, members of the public can contact MOH at 1800-2254122. For feedback on any hygiene lapses, the public may contact NEA at the 24-hr hotline 1800-2255 632.

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For media queries, please contact:

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