



PRECAUTIONS TAKEN BY AVA TO PREVENT BIRD FLU FROM ENTERING INTO SINGAPORE

1 Singapore is free from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (commonly known as Bird Flu). In light of recent reports of outbreaks of Bird flu in the region, the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) has taken all the necessary precautions to prevent the disease from entering Singapore.

2 Bird flu predominantly affects poultry. In rare occasions, for example in Hong Kong and Vietnam, people coming into close contact with diseased live poultry have been infected. There is no evidence of human to human transmission. Bird Flu is not known to be transmitted to people through consumption of meat and eggs. We would like to assure the public that eggs and poultry in Singapore are safe for consumption.

3 AVA has suspended the import of live birds from countries affected by Bird Flu. AVA also has an ongoing surveillance and monitoring programme for Bird Flu. Imported eggs and poultry consignments are routinely sampled and tested for the presence of Bird Flu virus. We have intensified our import inspection and testing of poultry at points of entry.

4 As a further precaution, AVA officers have intensified surveillance of our poultry slaughterhouses. We require their workers to protect themselves with masks and strictly adhere to hygiene practices.

5 In addition, AVA has briefed poultry farmers on how to recognize clinical signs that could indicate Bird Flu. The farmers are required to immediately report any unusual deaths or suspicion of the disease.

6 Singapore has multiple sources of poultry, including Brazil, China, Germany, Malaysia, The Netherlands and the USA. This ensures that any shortfall in supply due to disease outbreaks can be quickly met.

7 For further information on Bird Flu, please see attached Fact Sheet.

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Fact Sheet on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

What is Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza?

- The Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is a poultry disease caused by some H5 and H7 subtypes of type A Influenza virus.
- HPAI is commonly known as “Bird Flu”.
- It produces varying degrees of clinical illness in the affected birds. The disease is extremely contagious and causes high mortality in poultry.
- Recent outbreaks have occurred in Hong Kong, Japan, Vietnam and South Korea.

Which animals can be affected by HPAI?

- HPAI can infect chickens, turkeys, quails, ducks and geese as well as a wide variety of other birds.

How is HPAI transmitted?

Migratory waterfowl act as the natural reservoir of the HPAI virus by carrying it in their intestinal tracts and shedding it in their faeces. The virus is spread to susceptible birds through :

- Direct contact with nasal and respiratory secretions from infected birds
- Direct contact with the faeces of infected birds
- Contamination of feed, water, equipment and clothing
- Infection of chicks from broken contaminated eggs in the incubator

What are the clinical signs of an infected bird?

Birds affected by HPAI may show one or more of the following signs :

- Sudden death without clinical signs
- Lack of energy and appetite
- Drastic drop in egg production
- Swelling of head, eyelids, comb, wattles and hocks
- Purple discolouration of the wattles, combs and legs
- Nasal discharge
- Coughing and sneezing
- Diarrhoea

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What is the potential threat to human health?

- It is very rare for HPAI virus to be transmitted from chickens to humans
- The H5N1 strain of the HPAI has been known to pass from chickens to humans during the 1997 outbreak in Hong Kong and the recent outbreak in Vietnam.
- The H5N1 strain isolated in Hong Kong in 1997 was highly pathogenic for chickens and infected 18 people of which 6 died.

How is the virus transmitted to humans?

The virus is transmitted through close contact with infected chickens. Transmission occurs through inhalation of droplets of nasal and respiratory secretions from the infected chickens when they cough or sneeze.

There have been no known cases of human-to-human transmission of HPAI. The virus is also not known to be transmitted to humans through the consumption of poultry meat and eggs.

What is the control strategy for HPAI?

The strategy is to eradicate HPAI by :

- Immediate destruction and disposal of infected and in-contact birds to remove the major source of virus
- Strict quarantine and movement controls to prevent the spread of infection
- Decontamination to remove and reduce the virus
- Tracing and surveillance to locate the source of infection, locate other infected premises and determine the extent of the infection

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