

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY  
USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT  
POLICY

Voluntary  Public

**Date:** 1/29/2014

**GAIN Report Number:** HK1406

## Hong Kong

**Post:** Hong Kong

### 21-Day Suspension of Live Poultry Trade

**Report Categories:**

Agriculture in the News

Poultry and Products

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

**Approved By:**

Erich Kuss

**Prepared By:**

Caroline Yuen

**Report Highlights:**

The Hong Kong government (HKG) announced in the late evening of January 27 that a number of samples from a batch of live chicken imported from a registered poultry farm in Guangdong Province (adjacent to Hong Kong) were confirmed H7 positive in the H7 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test. Given that the batch of chicken had already been transported to the wholesale market, the entire market is considered part of the infected area. Hence the HKG ordered that all the 20,000 head of chicken in the wholesale market would be culled the following day. The market would also be closed for 21 days until February 18 for thorough disinfection and cleansing according to OIE recommendation. Since all live chickens, including both imported and locally supplied, have to be distributed through this wholesale market, the market closure implies that Hong Kong will not have supplies of live chicken for the following 21 days.

## **Summary**

Following the H7 positive confirmation of a number of samples from a batch of live chicken imported from a registered poultry farm in Guangdong Province, the HKG ordered the culling of all some 20,000 chickens in the wholesale market as the infected batch has already been transported there, waiting to go to retail/catering outlets the following day. Considered an infected area, the market will be closed for 21 days for thorough cleansing and disinfection according to OIE recommendation. All the supply of live chicken has to go through this wholesale market, its 21-day closure signifies the suspension of all live poultry trade as well, including both live chicken imports from China and the locally supplied chickens.

According to the protocol between Hong Kong and China, China will suspend the supply of live chicken from the source farm of the infected batch for 21 days and will launch an investigation. Exports to Hong Kong will resume only when both Hong Kong and the Chinese governments have agreed on the investigation report.

The local trade was very angry and frustrated with the government. Local farms have to conform to stringent requirements and have not been found with any H7 virus. However, they are not allowed to sell their chickens to the market subsequent to the closure of the wholesale market, leading to a number of problems. First, during the closure of the market, the some 25 farms will be over populated. It is estimated that there will be an accumulation of 300,000 to 500,000 chickens. By the time they are allowed to be sold, some of them will already be considered too old. Secondly, the trade has been asking the HKG to separate the wholesale venue between the imported and locally supplied chickens, but their request has not been granted. Thirdly, this infected batch of chickens should not have been allowed into the wholesale market and mixed with other supplies before test results are available. Fourthly, this market closure falls upon the Chinese New Year which is the peak season for live chicken business.

It is expected that the Hong Kong government will offer compensation to the trade. Hong Kong currently has a daily supply of chicken around 18,000 heads, 11,000 of which come from local farms and the rest from registered farms in China.

## **Background**

The Hong Kong government has adopted stringent control measures to reduce the risk of avian influenza. These measures include biosecurity measures, traceability arrangements, a vaccination

program for poultry against H5 A1 and import protocols for supplies from China. As one of the avian influenza risk control measures, the HKG requires that all imported and locally supplied live poultry be distributed through the only wholesale market in Hong Kong. Given the growing number of H7N9 human infection cases in China, Hong Kong started to conduct H7 genetic tests on imported live poultry at the boundary control point since April 2013.

The public in general is not surprised to find the imported chickens infected with the H7 virus in view of the growing number of human infected cases in China and Hong Kong's reliance of live chicken supplies from there. As of January 27, 2014, a total of 246 human cases of avian influenza A (H7N9) have been reported in China. Given the proximity between Hong Kong and China and the close communication between people of the two places, Hong Kong also has had three confirmed human cases of avian influenza A(H7N9) since the first case in December 2013. All three patients had recent travels to China prior to sickness.

Meanwhile, the Hong Kong government pledged that they have stepped up the surveillance of avian influenza both for local farms and human.