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First Human H7N9 Case Detected in Hong Kong

Report Categories:

Agriculture in the News

Poultry and Products

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

The Hong Kong government confirmed the first human case of avian influenza A (H7N9) in Hong Kong on December 3, 2013. The infected woman, who recently had bought, slaughtered and ate a chicken in Shenzhen, is now in critical condition in a Hong Kong hospital. The HKG has banned live chicken imports from the three registered farms in Shenzhen following the confirmation of the case.

Background

The Hong Kong government (HKG) confirmed Hong Kong's first human case of avian influenza A (H7N9) on December 4, 2013. The infected woman had recently traveled to Shenzhen where she slaughtered and ate a chicken. She is now in critical condition staying in hospital. Four persons living together with her also have had light flu symptoms. They are all staying in hospital for isolation and testing. The test results of these people who have had close contact with the infected patient will provide clues to the likelihood of human-to-human transmission of avian influenza A (H7N9).

Following confirmation of the first human case of avian influenza A (H7N9) in Hong Kong on December 3, 2013, the HKG has banned live chicken imports from the three registered farms in Shenzhen because the victim had a recent history of contact with live chicken in Shenzhen. Supply of live chickens to the Hong Kong market from other registered farms in China and local farms are not affected.

The HKG indicated in case of any detection of H7N9 in a poultry farm, they will suspend the poultry supplies including meat and egg products from this farm and any other farms/plants located within a radius of 13 km.

Hong Kong still allows retail of live chickens. Daily supply amounts to 18,000 head, 11,000 of which come from 30 local farms, with the remaining 7,000 from registered farms in China. There are 53 registered farms in China which are eligible to export live chickens to Hong Kong and about 30 of these eligible farms are located in Guangdong province which is adjacent to Hong Kong.

Given that the chicken supplies from only 3 farms are suspended, Hong Kong should not be short of any live chicken supply. However, consumer confidence in the short term may be adversely affected. Consumers may not buy live chickens for a short while to see if there are any new developments. The consumption of chilled and frozen poultry is unlikely to be affected.

The HKG has raised the alert level of the infectious control measures in both human and poultry aspects. On the poultry side, they said they will ensure the strict adherence to biosafety and cleansing measures required at retail, wholesale and farm levels.

China had its first human H7N9 case reported in March this year. So far there were 139 confirmed cases and two of which occurred in the Hong Kong adjacent province, Guangdong.