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Bird Market Closed due to Detection of H5N1 Virus

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

Agriculture in the News

Pest/Disease Occurrences

Poultry and Products

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

Following confirmation of H5N1 virus detected in a swab sample collected from a bird cage in a pet shop on July 5, all 1,000 birds in the pet shop where the sample was collected were destroyed. There are 18 bird pet shops in the neighborhood housing about 10,000 birds in total. The Hong Kong government immediately declared the market as an infected area and ordered for its closure for 21 days.

Summary

On July 5, the Hong Kong Government (HKG) confirmed that the H5N1 virus was detected on a swab sample collected from a bird cage holding an Oriental magpie robin at a pet shop in the bird market. The swab sample was collected on June 25 for laboratory test under a regular avian influenza surveillance program.

Upon confirmation of the virus, the HKG ordered the culling of all the 1,000 birds in the pet shop where the sample was collected whereas all 18 bird pet shops in the market is to be closed for 21 days. A compensation package is to be negotiated between the HKG and shop owners. Meanwhile, thorough cleaning of all bird pet shops and the neighborhood was conducted by shop owners and the government. The government reported that all pet birds in the infected area are closely monitored and no abnormality has been observed so far.

According to government's surveillance program with respect to bird pet shops, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department each month collects some 300 swab samples from all 39 pet bird shops across the territory to test for avian flu viruses. For the first half year of 2012, more than 1,700 swab samples have been collected and tested for H5. No H5N1 virus was detected in all 3,400 swab samples collected in 2011.

According to the existing practice, each batch of pet bird imports is subject to swab test before they are released. A government official commented that given the stringent import requirements for pet birds, it is possible that the virus was passed to the pet bird in question through wild birds.

The HKG has been conducting H5 test against dead wild birds as part of the surveillance program. In the first six months of 2012, 21 dead wild birds were found positive for H5N1. The number was higher than the 5 cases for the entire year of 2011. The table below depicts the result of the HKG's surveillance on dead wild birds.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of dead wild birds tested	9,839	8,719	7,305	8,622	5,207	5,465
Number of dead wild birds found with H5N1 virus	15	21	7	6	1	5
Prevalence %	0.15	0.24	0.10.	0.07	0.02	0.09

Source : Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department