



Foreign Agricultural Service

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## **Hong Kong**

### **Pest/Disease Occurances**

# **Deadly Goose Flu Virus Returned in February But Did Not Spread 2001**

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#### **Report Highlights:**

Several Hong Kong media today carried stories about the return of a potent bird flu virus to Hong Kong for the first time since the deadly bird flu epidemic of 1997, however, the case detected was based on a sample taken on February 22 and there is no evidence of the flu having spread to other birds since then.

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Hong Kong [HK1], HK

Several Hong Kong media today carried stories about the return of a potent bird flu virus to Hong Kong for the first time since the deadly bird flu epidemic of 1997, however, the case detected was based on a sample taken on February 22 and there is no evidence of the flu having spread to other birds since then.

For the first time since the chicken flu incident in 1997, the "Goose 96, Type H5N1" virus was found in one feces sample taken from a live chicken in the wet market in February. This virus was identified as being in the same family as the virus that caused 6 deaths and the slaughter of 1.6 million chickens in 1997.

Representatives from both the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department claimed that the virus does not pose any threat to public health. The infected sample was taken as part of a routine surveillance exercise in February. As the test results of the samples took four weeks, the chicken with infected feces had long since been sold into the market. AFCD was unable to trace the source of the virus, however, the market was steam-cleaned and no further signs of the virus have been detected.

While the Hong Kong government officials declined to comment on the effect of the goose virus on chicken, they assured the public that the virus cannot be transmitted to humans. Nonetheless, they reminded people in the food industry of the importance of hygiene to maintaining food safety.

The incident does not seem to have caused any negative effect on poultry consumption. On the contrary, today's press coverage reflects a conscious policy of the Hong Kong Government to become more transparent in its disease control efforts and to keep the public informed of its routine surveillance program. As a result, the public has gradually been trained not to overreact to incidents like this one.