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## Pakistan

### Poultry and Products

## Third Avian Influenza Outbreak in Karachi 2008

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**Report Highlights:**

On February 23, Pakistan's National Reference Laboratory for Avian Influenza (NRLAI) confirmed the presence of the H5NI virus at a commercial poultry farm in Karachi.

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Includes PSD Changes: No  
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## **Pakistan Confirms Third Outbreak of H5N1 in Karachi During 2008**

On February 23, Pakistan's National Reference Laboratory for Avian Influenza (NRLAI) confirmed the presence of the H5N1 virus at a commercial poultry farm in Karachi. The farm is located in the Dumlotee vicinity of Gadap Town near Malir River in Karachi. The confirmed cases occurred on a six-week old broiler farm. The flock size was about 6,000 birds; 1,000 died before confirmation and the rest were culled. The affected area was sealed after confirmation of the H5N1 virus.

### **AI Outbreak Cycle Continues Unabated**

The AI outbreak cycle continues unabated in Pakistan and is following the traditional pattern. Outbreaks are first detected in North Pakistan, gradually traveling towards the south. Abbottabad, Manshera and Islamabad are the most vulnerable areas in the north while Karachi is the most susceptible in the south. These four areas are also major commercial poultry farm hubs in Pakistan with almost 75 percent of commercial poultry concentrated in or around these cities.

### **More than 100,000 Birds Dead or Culled**

This outbreak is the ninth confirmed H5N1 case in Pakistan during the 2007/08 migratory bird season, with more than 106,000 birds dead or culled so far. The last reported outbreak in Pakistan was in Abbottabad on February 18. This is also the third confirmed outbreak in Karachi during 2008. The previous confirmed outbreaks in Karachi this year were on February 1 and February 4. More outbreaks are expected given the pattern of last year's outbreaks.

### **Voluntary Culling**

About 4,500 apparently infected birds were culled by the poultry farmer before confirmation of H5N1 virus. The birds were later dumped in an old well within the farm's limits. This is being attributed as voluntary culling by the Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA). No government official was present at the farm during the culling process. According to PPA, the association convinced the owners of the poultry operation to cull the infected birds before confirmation of H5N1 virus as a precautionary measure.

### **Deviation from Standard AI Protocol**

Sources privy to these developments at the farm have termed them as a major shift from the approved AI protocol. According to experts, the protocol calls for culling in and around the infected farm by qualified government staff with disposal of the dead birds strictly according to prescribed scientific procedures. Standard protocol was apparently not observed in this particular case.

### **MINFAL's Outreach Capacity**

This outbreak has highlighted concerns regarding the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock's (MINFAL) outreach and response capacity. NRLAI is the only laboratory in Pakistan which can diagnose the H5N1 virus. If the poultry farm is situated in a far flung area, it could take several days to collect samples from the farm, send to the laboratory in Islamabad and confirm the presence of the virus. As initiation of precautionary measures are dependent on the confirmation of results, every hour between reporting of the suspected infection and confirmation increases the risk of disease spread.

The upgrade of at least one more poultry laboratory with diagnostic capacity for H5N1, preferably in Karachi, could significantly increase the Government of Pakistan's ability to contain the spread of this deadly virus. Given the frequency of reporting of AI outbreaks and their location across the country, there is also an urgent need to increase the number of rapid response teams from MINFAL to take proper scientific control measures in a timelier manner and in accordance with standard protocol.

**OTHER RELEVANT REPORTS**

REPORT #	SUBJECT	DATE SUBMITTED
PK8007	<a href="#">Pakistan Confirms H5N1 in Mansehra &amp; Abbottabad</a>	02/20/2008
PK8004	<a href="#">Thir d Avian Influenza Outbreak in Karachi 2008</a>	02/04/2008
PK7032	<a href="#">Avian Influenza Alert</a>	12/18/2007
PK7027	<a href="#">Avian Influenza Alert</a>	11/06/2007

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