

Eurasian Curlew carcass tests positive for H5 virus

A carcass of a Eurasian Curlew found in the Mai Po Nature Reserve (MPNR) was suspected to be positive for the H5 avian influenza (AI) virus based on preliminary testing, a spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said today (January 25). Further confirmatory tests are being conducted.

The bird carcass was found and collected earlier at a gei wai in the MPNR. The Eurasian Curlew is a winter visitor mainly found in the intertidal area of Deep Bay area, including Mai Po.

The spokesman said cleaning and disinfection of visitor facilities including bird hides and boardwalk has been stepped up. Disinfectant carpet has been placed at the entrance of the MPNR for visitors to disinfect the soles of their shoes. In addition, the AFCD is closely monitoring the situation of the birds in the MPNR and has put up notices to remind visitors to pay attention to personal hygiene.

There are no chicken farms within three kilometres of where the dead bird was found. Since the beginning of winter, the AFCD has strengthened AI surveillance and closely monitored the situation of the local poultry farms and the wholesale market. Poultry farmers, pet bird shop owners and licence holders of pet poultry and racing pigeons are reminded from time to time to ensure that proper precautions against AI have been implemented.

The spokesman said that the department will closely monitor poultry farms and the wholesale market to ensure that proper precautions against AI have been taken. The department will continue its wild bird monitoring and surveillance.

"People should avoid personal contact with wild birds and live poultry and their droppings. They should clean their hands thoroughly after coming into contact with them. The public can call 1823 for AFCD's follow-up if they come across suspicious, sick or dead birds, including the carcasses of wild birds and poultry," the spokesman said.

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will continue to be vigilant over live poultry stalls. It will also remind stall operators to maintain good hygiene.

The Department of Health will keep up its health education to remind the public to maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene to prevent AI.

The AFCD, the FEHD, the Customs and Excise Department and the Police will strive to deter the illegal import of poultry and birds into Hong Kong to minimise the risk of AI outbreaks caused by imported poultry and birds

that have not gone through inspection and quarantine.

All relevant government departments will continue to be highly vigilant and strictly enforce preventive measures against AI.

Health advice about preventing AI is available from the "H5N1 Health Advice" page on the AFCD website at www.afcd.gov.hk.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Tuesday, January 25, 2022 is 95.1 (same as yesterday's index).

Re-industrialisation Funding Scheme funds project to set up smart production line for fresh liquid egg products

A spokesperson for the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) said today (January 25) that the Re-industrialisation Funding Scheme (RFS) had approved funding of \$14.9 million for a project to set up a new smart production line for the production of fresh liquid egg products in Hong Kong by a local food manufacturer, Luen Tai Hong Kong Fresh Liquid Eggs Limited. The new smart production line will be set up in Tai Po InnoPark.

Speaking at the signing ceremony of the funding agreement, the Commissioner for Innovation and Technology, Ms Rebecca Pun, said, "We are glad that the food manufacturing and processing industry is making use of the RFS fund to set up a new smart production line in Hong Kong. The parent company of the funding recipient today, Luen Tai Hong, was established in 1957, and is currently a key local supplier of fresh liquid eggs for many restaurants and food manufacturers in Hong Kong. We look forward to receiving applications from more manufacturers for the RFS to develop smart production and strengthen the 'Made in Hong Kong' brand".

The approved total project cost is about \$45 million and the manufacturer will contribute about \$30 million. The project will adopt smart manufacturing technologies with a view to achieving smart production of fresh

liquid eggs, which in turn enhances production efficiency and capacity. The project is expected to increase the daily production of fresh liquid eggs by two to three times, while lowering the production cost by 20 per cent to 30 per cent.

Under the RFS, the Government will provide funding on a 1 (Government): 2 (company) matching basis to subsidise manufacturers to establish smart production lines in Hong Kong. The funding ceiling is one-third of the total project cost or \$15 million, whichever is lower. Since the launch of the RFS in July 2020, the ITC has received 35 applications. Among the 25 applications assessed by the RFS Vetting Committee, 21 were supported in principle, covering sectors such as biotechnology, food manufacturing and processing, construction, printing, medical devices, nanofiber materials, product accessories and health products. The total funding amount is about \$153 million.

The RFS is open for application throughout the year. Details are available at the Innovation and Technology Fund website (www.itf.gov.hk/en/funding-programmes/facilitating-technology/rfs). For enquiries, please contact the RFS Secretariat (Tel: 3655 5678; email: rfs-enquiry@itc.gov.hk).

Government extends period of operation under “restriction-testing declaration” and compulsory testing notice at Ha Kwai House in Kwai Chung Estate

The Government yesterday (January 24) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" (declaration) effective from 7pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Kwai Chung (i.e. Ha Kwai House, Kwai Chung Estate. See Annex.) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. The Government today (January 25) decided to extend the period of operation and aims at finishing the exercise at about 7am on January 29. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises and undergo five tests under designated arrangement (including the one conducted yesterday), until all such persons identified in the "restricted area" have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained, and upon agreement of the Secretary for Food and Health having regard to all the circumstances and

public interest of Hong Kong.

The Government spokesman said, "Residents of Ha Kwai House, Kwai Chung Estate have been subject to compulsory testing on January 22, and an operation under "restriction-testing declaration" was conducted yesterday (January 24). It is worrying to note that there are at least 13 cases tested preliminarily positive or positive among units on different floors and with different orientations at Ha Kwai House which indicates sign of outbreak. In view of the significant risk of infection at Ha Kwai House of Kwai Chung Estate, we consider it necessary to undertake determined action by extending the 'restriction-testing declaration' operation made earlier under Cap. 599J to January 29 to prevent the virus from further spreading."

The Government has set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and requested persons subject to testing to undergo testing as designated between January 24 and January 28. Arrangements have been made for persons subject to testing to undergo a nucleic acid test at specimen collection stations where dedicated staff will collect samples through combined nasal and throat swabs. Persons subject to testing must stay at their place of residence until all test results are ascertained to avoid cross-infection risk. The Government will arrange for door-to-door specimen collection for people with impaired mobility and elderly persons. As a mutant strain is involved, and having considered relevant infection risks, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons and persons who have recently been tested are also required to undergo testing.

The Government spokesman said, "We understand that this exercise will cause inconvenience to the public. We sincerely appeal to the co-operation of residents of Ha Kwai House (including those who are at work and not currently at the premises) to return to their household rather than moving out of the premises and to comply with the testing arrangement. For those who have visited Ha Kwai House in the past two weeks for more than two hours, they should undergo testing on (1) January 22 or 23; (2) January 24; (3) January 25; (4) January 26; and (5) January 29 in accordance with the compulsory testing notice issued earlier. The Government will make a public announcement when the declaration expires officially."

In order to maintain public and emergency services within the "restricted area", the Government and relevant working staff (such as healthcare officers and other officers of the Hospital Authority, testing service providers engaged by the Government, and cleaning service providers, etc) are allowed to enter and leave the "restricted area" on condition that personal information and contacts are given, as well as certain infection control instructions are followed (including undergoing testing before leaving the "restricted area" without the need to wait for the test results). Separately, in the cases in which employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not deduct the salaries or benefits of the employees.

If staying in the "restricted area" will cause unreasonable hardship to individuals who are not residents in the area when the declaration takes

effect, government officers may exercise discretion and allow that person to leave the area after considering the individual circumstances. That person must have followed the instructions to undergo testing and leave his/her personal information for contact purposes.

The Housing Department has set up hotlines (Tel: 2751 4421, 2751 4424 and 2751 4428) for residents restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance. The Social Welfare Department will also provide assistance to the affected persons.

The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the results patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the persons concerned have complied with the compulsory testing notices and "restriction-testing declaration". Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person would also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

[Temporary suspension of public libraries computer system](#)

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department today (January 25) announced that maintenance work for the Hong Kong Public Libraries computer system will be carried out from 00.30am on February 1 to 11.59pm on February 2, during which the following services will be suspended:

- library mobile app services and Internet and telephone renewal services;
- other online library services, including the library catalogue, borrowers' record enquiries, reservation of library materials and Internet and Digital Service Workstations and electronic resources (e-Books and e-Databases); and
- self-service library stations (readers may still return books to the stations before the due date, and the loan records will be updated on the next working day).

Details can be obtained from the website at www.hkpl.gov.hk/en/library-notices/library-notices-list.html. For enquiries, please call 2921 0208.