

Black-faced spoonbill carcass tests positive for H5N1 virus

A carcass of a black-faced spoonbill found in the Hong Kong Wetland Park (Wetland Park) in Tin Shui Wai was confirmed to be positive for the H5N1 avian influenza virus after laboratory testing, a spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said today (December 20).

The bird carcass was found and collected at the mudflat in the Wetland Park on December 16, and was suspected to be H5 positive after initial laboratory testing on December 17. The Deep Bay area where the Wetland Park is located is one of the black-faced spoonbill's major wintering sites.

Cleaning and disinfection have been stepped up at the venue where the dead bird was found in the Wetland Park. Notices have also been put up to remind visitors to pay attention to personal hygiene. The Wetland Park will keep a close watch on the situation of birds inside the Park.

Two chicken farms are within three kilometres of where the dead bird was found. The AFCD already informed the chicken farms concerned and found no abnormal mortality or symptoms of avian influenza among the chicken flocks so far. The AFCD has also phoned poultry farmers to remind them to strengthen precautionary and biosecurity measures against avian influenza. Letters will be issued to pet bird shop owners and licence holders of pet poultry and racing pigeons, reminding them that proper precautions must be taken. The AFCD will continue to monitor the situation closely.

The spokesman said the department will closely monitor poultry farms and a wholesale market to ensure that proper precautions against avian influenza have been implemented. 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 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 with its health education to remind the public to maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene to prevent avian influenza.

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 avian influenza 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 avian influenza.

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