

Eurasian Curlew carcass tests positive for H5N1 virus

A carcass of a Eurasian Curlew found in the Mai Po Nature Reserve (MPNR) was confirmed to be positive for the H5N1 avian influenza (AI) virus after laboratory testing, a spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said today (January 26).

The bird carcass was found and collected earlier at a gei wai in the MPNR and preliminarily tested positive for H5 AI virus on January 24. 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 and 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.