

Eurasian wigeon sample tests positive for H5 virus

A Eurasian wigeon collected earlier from the Hong Kong Wetland Park and receiving treatment at the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden (KFBG) 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 (December 22). Further confirmatory tests are being conducted.

The Eurasian wigeon was humanely dispatched and AFCD staff have collected the carcass for further testings. AFCD staff also conducted an inspection of the KFBG bird collection and collected faecal samples from other birds at a higher infection risk kept at the KFBG for testings. No abnormalities were noted at this stage.

The spokesman noted that the KFBG has stepped up cleaning and disinfection. For the sake of prudence, all birds at a higher infection risk will be quarantined for 21 days and subject to further testings. The AFCD will closely monitor the situation.

One chicken farm is within 3 kilometres of where the bird was kept. The AFCD has informed the chicken farm concerned and no abnormal mortality or symptoms of avian influenza among the chicken flocks have been found so far. The AFCD will remind poultry farmers to strengthen precautionary and biosecurity measures against AI. Pet bird shop owners and licence holders of bird exhibitions will also be reminded to implement proper precautions against AI.

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 birds suspected to be sick or dead, 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 importation 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 on the "Avian Influenza Health Advice" page at www.afcd.gov.hk.