

Peregrine falcon tests positive for H5 virus

A carcass of a peregrine falcon found in Wu Kai Sha was suspected to be positive for the H5 avian influenza virus based on preliminary testing, a spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said today (January 29). Further confirmatory tests are being conducted.

The bird carcass was found and collected at Lake Silver, Wu Kai Sha. The peregrine falcon is a common resident and winter visitor species.

The spokesman said no chicken farms are within 3 kilometres of where the dead bird was found. Nevertheless, the AFCD will still phone 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 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.