

Pin-tailed snipe and Eurasian teal carcasses test positive for H5 virus

Carcasses of a Pin-tailed snipe and an Eurasian teal found in the Hong Kong Wetland Park (Wetland Park) in Tin Shui Wai were 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 21). Further confirmatory tests are being conducted.

The bird carcasses were collected earlier at the mudflat in the Wetland Park.

The spokesman said cleaning and disinfection has been stepped up at the location where the dead birds were 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.

One chicken farm is within 3 kilometres of where the dead birds were collected. The AFCD immediately 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.