

Update on cluster of Influenza A cases in Kwai Chung Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on a cluster of patients infected with Influenza A in a rehabilitation ward (EXITERS), the spokesperson for Kwai Chung Hospital made the following update today (January 8):

One more patient in the ward, a 38-year-old female, presented with a fever and headache. Appropriate viral tests were arranged for the patient and the test result was positive for Influenza A. The patient concerned is being treated in isolation and is in stable condition.

Admission and visiting arrangements to the ward concerned have been suspended. Infection control measures have already been enhanced according to established guidelines. The hospital will continue to closely monitor the conditions of the patients in the ward concerned.

The case has been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow up.

Import of poultry meat and products from areas in Poland and US suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (January 8) that in view of notifications from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in the Trzebnicki District of Dolnośląskie Region in Poland, and Marin County of the State of California, Audrain County of the State of Missouri, and Northumberland County of the State of Pennsylvania in the United States (US), the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the above-mentioned areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 2 140 tonnes of frozen poultry meat from Poland, and about 21 470 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 57.11 million poultry eggs from the US in the first nine months of last year.

"The CFS has contacted the Polish and American authorities over the issues and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the

relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on January 5 to noon today (January 8), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 240 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category, in the past three days (including last Saturday and Sunday). No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan"

(www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For

details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 23 907 samples of food imported from Japan (including 15 897 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 6 816 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

SED to visit Guangzhou and Shenzhen

The Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, will depart tomorrow (January 9) for Guangzhou and Shenzhen to officiate at the plaque unveiling ceremony of the first teacher training and exchange base on the Mainland and the opening of Mainland study tours for newly-joined teachers at South China Normal University (SCNU).

During the visit, Dr Choi will conduct exchanges with SCNU leaders and Hong Kong students studying at the University, and tour the Affiliated High School of SCNU and Sun Yat-sen University. She will also join students participating in the Mainland study tour of the senior secondary subject of Citizenship and Social Development to visit a spot in Shenzhen.

Dr Choi will return to Hong Kong on Thursday (January 11). During her absence, the Under Secretary for Education, Mr Sze Chun-fai, will be the Acting Secretary for Education.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, January 8, 2024 is 104.3 (up 0.1 against last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, January 6, 2024 was 104.2 (down 0.2 against last Friday's index).