Beat: Miscellaneous

3-year-old boy dies of bird flu in Cambodia`s capital

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USPA News - A three-year-old boy from the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh has died of bird flu after he was exposed to sick and dead poultry, the country`s health ministry confirmed on Friday. It marks the second bird flu death in Cambodia so far this year.

The child, from the village of Prey Lyea on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, developed a running nose, fever, cough, and began vomiting on February 22. His parents took the child to a private clinic that same day but his condition worsened and the boy was admitted to National Pediatric Hospital on February 28. Last Sunday, when he was suffering from symptoms that included fever, cough, running nose, vomiting, dyspnea, and cyanoses, the boy was transferred to Calmette Hospital. "The boy died about one hour after his admission on March 2," the country`s health ministry and the World Health Organization (WHO) said in a joint statement. The Cambodian Health Ministry said more than 90 percent of the chickens and ducks in Prey Lyea had suddenly died around mid-February. "The boy was often going to a neighbor`s house where their poultry died. The relatives reported that the boy had no direct contact but the chickens died in close proximity to the house of the case," the statement said. After the boy died, the case was detected by the National Institute of Public Health, which sent samples taken from the child to the Cambodian Pasteur Institute (IPC), where it was confirmed the boy had been suffering from H5N1 influenza, making it the country`s second bird flu death so far this year. Four other victims this year have survived the illness. "Avian influenza H5N1 remains a serious threat to the health of all Cambodians and more so for children, who seem to be the most vulnerable and are at high risk," said Cambodian Health Minister Mam Bunheng. "There have been 53 cases of H5N1 infection in humans [in Cambodia] since 2005 and here is the sixth case of this year." Bunheng said children in the country often care for domestic poultry by feeding them, cleaning pens and gathering eggs, putting them at great risk for bird flu. "Children may also have closer contact with poultry as they often treat them as pets and also seem to be the most vulnerable and are at high risk because they like to play where poultry are found," he added. Since 2003, the H5N1 bird flu virus has killed or forced the culling of more than 400 million domestic poultry worldwide and caused an estimated $20 billion in economic damage before it was eliminated from most of the 63 infected countries. Cambodia, however, announced `bird flu contamination zones` in Phnom Penh and Kandal province this week after hundreds of birds died. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the bird flu virus has infected more than 600 people since it first appeared, killing around 360 of them. Most cases and deaths were recorded in Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt and China. Cambodia has recorded a total of 53 cases of H5N1 bird flu since 2005, including 35 deaths.

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