

Evening News

Mon 26 Jan 2004

Boy, six, Thailand's first bird flu victim

STUART REID

A SIX-YEAR-OLD boy has died in a Bangkok hospital from bird flu.

It is the first confirmed death in Thailand as a result of the outbreak, although a man who died last week may have been infected.

The only other deaths from the virus sweeping Asian chicken flocks have been in Vietnam, where six people have died.

Thai health officials have also confirmed two new cases of the virus in humans, while Indonesia has confirmed an outbreak among its chicken flocks.

There has been no evidence that bird flu can pass from humans to humans, but the World Health Organisation has warned that the Asian outbreak could mutate and become more dangerous as it spreads.

The Thai boy who died is believed to have picked up the virus after touching the carcasses of infected poultry in his village in western Kanchanaburi province.

Thailand's public health minister, Sudarat Keyuraphan, announcing the boy's death, also confirmed press reports a ten-year-old girl and a 58-year-old woman in the neighbouring province of Suphanburi were infected. A seven-year-old boy from the same province was confirmed as infected last week. Test results are pending in the case of a 56-year-old man who raised fighting cocks at his home near Bangkok and died on Friday.

Ms Sudarat said the boy's health "deteriorated very rapidly".

She said: "This is typical of bird flu. It is very hard to get infected by this disease, but once you have it you tend to go down very fast."

Thailand has now expanded its emergency zone from two provinces to ten. It has enlisted hundreds of soldiers to help cull millions of chickens.

Prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, faced with accusations of a cover-up, has admitted his government initially kept quiet about its suspicions avian flu had broken out, to avoid causing public panic.

"We have suspected this for about a couple of weeks," he said.

Yesterday saw Indonesia become the seventh Asian country to confirm an outbreak of avian flu among its chicken flocks.



Web links

- [Dept of Health - pandemic flu](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EmergencyPlanning/PandemicFlu/fs/en)
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EmergencyPlanning/PandemicFlu/fs/en>
- [WHO - Bird Flu fact sheet](http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004_01_15/en/)
http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004_01_15/en/

Related topic

- [Bird flu](http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=161)
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Last updated: 26-Jan-04 13:08 GMT

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