

Evening News

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## Chinese develop bird flu vaccine

SCIENTISTS in China have developed a bird flu vaccine for poultry and mammals that can fend off the deadly virus and help stop its spread, it was reported today.

The H5N1 strain of bird flu has killed at least 45 people in Asia in the last year, including 13 in Vietnam in the past month, and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao has urged "all possible measures" to prevent the emergence of the disease in China.

Although there have been no outbreaks reported in China so far this year, some places were not prepared for a possible outbreak, officials admitted last month.

The Agriculture Ministry said the new vaccine could "cut a key link in the transmission chain".

Using "reverse genetics", researchers at the Key Laboratory of Animal Influenza altered the genome sequence of the virus to create the vaccine, according to reports.

"Tests show the vaccine enables ducks and geese to fight H5N1, the highly lethal strain of bird flu, three weeks after the flocks were vaccinated," a ministry statement said.

"The new vaccine also provides at least ten months of protection for chickens - four months longer than the existing bird flu preventive drugs."

Officials predicted it would help "overcome a bottleneck in the technology of developing a remedy".

The published report said the vaccine was believed to be safe for both poultry and mammals.

Most bird flu victims have caught the virus from infected poultry, but experts fear it could mutate into a form that could easily pass between humans, unleashing a global flu pandemic that could kill millions.

- Bird flu has been found in chickens near the Cambodian capital, raising fears about the spread of the virus in a country with little to no health system.

The H5N1 virus strain was detected in dead chickens at a poultry farm in Kandal, just south of Phnom Penh.

Bird flu first hit Cambodia in September last year, but the virus did not claim its first Cambodian victim until last month, when a 25-year-old woman succumbed in Vietnam.

Officials in the south-east Asian nation, which is still recovering from the Khmer Rouge



genocide of the 1970s, conceded they are unable to do much in the face of a highly contagious threat.

### Web links

- [Dept of Health - pandemic flu](#)  
<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/)

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- [Bird flu](#)  
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