

  
THE SCOTSMAN

Tue 28 Sep 2004

## Thai woman's bird flu raises fears virus is passed between humans

SUTIN WANNABOVORN IN BANGKOK

A THAI woman was yesterday diagnosed with bird flu after her sister and niece died with symptoms of the virus, raising the possibility that the illness had passed from human-to-human for the first time.

Health experts moved to play down the likelihood of human transmission, saying all three individuals could have come into contact with birds infected with the virus.

The woman, identified only as Pranom, 32, was found to have the potentially deadly H5N1 virus of avian influenza but her condition was improving, Charal Trinwuthipong, director general of the Disease Control Department said. He added that Pranom's six-year-old son is also ill.

Nine people have died of bird flu in Thailand, including an 18-year-old man last month in the latest round of the disease that resurfaced in July. The others died earlier in the year.

The disease also has killed 19 people in Vietnam, and tens of millions of chickens and other birds have died or been culled throughout much of Asia. In a joint statement yesterday, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation and the World Organisation for Animal Health described the epidemic as a "crisis of global importance" and said it demands the attention of the international community.

The confirmation of bird flu in Pranom raised concerns because her sister, Pranee, and niece Sakuntala, 11, died earlier this month with bird flu-like symptoms, even though it was impossible to confirm if they had the illness.

Pranee, 26, is not known to have come into contact with chickens, although Sakuntala and Pranom did. However, the World Health Organisation has cautioned against jumping to conclusions. "People have talked about human-to-human transmission.

"On the basis of what we've learned today, we can't make that kind of conclusion," said Peter Cordingley, WHO's regional spokesman in Manila, Philippines.

"At the end of the day, we may never know what caused these infections," he said.

### 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/)

## Related topic

- [Bird flu](http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=161)

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**Last updated:** 28-Sep-04 09:21 GMT

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