Beat: Health

H5N6 bird flu kills Chinese farmer in first human case

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USPA News - A farmer in southern China has died after contracting a strain of avian influenza that had never before been transmitted to humans, but there appeared to be little risk of further spreading, health authorities said on Wednesday. No additional cases have been discovered.

China`s Agriculture Ministry said officials began their investigation on April 23 when a farmer and his chickens in Nanchong, a city in Sichuan province, became ill. Samples from the chickens tested positive for avian influenza on Saturday while a throat swab from the victim tested positive for H5N6, a strain not seen in human before. The provincial department of China`s Health and Family Planning Commission said the victim, a 49-year-old man, had died. It did not say when and where the man died. "All close contacts of the patient went through medical observation and have not shown abnormal health signs," the department said. "Experts believe the risk of spreading is low." The Agriculture Ministry said there was no indication that the bird flu virus had infected other birds in the area but cautioned people to stay away from dead poultry. "The group of birds that tested positive was culled and disinfection was applied. Surveillance and monitoring activities in the area surrounding the farm are being carried out," the ministry said. Dr Zhang Zhongqui, Director General of the Animal Disease Control Center at the Agriculture Ministry`s Veterinary Bureau, described the H5N6 variant detected in Nanchong as low pathogenic. He said workers had culled a total of 1,338 chickens though none of them had died of the illness. Taiwan`s Centers for Disease Control said the H5N6 variant had previously been detected in poultry and wild birds in Germany, Sweden and the United States between 1984 and 2013, but never in humans. Taiwan itself also reported cases of H5N6 in migrating birds in December 2004.

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