

Father of Cambodian girl who died from bird flu tests positive for virus

February 24 2023



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The father of an 11-year-old Cambodian girl who died this week from bird flu has tested positive for the virus, health officials said on Friday.

The girl fell ill on February 16 with a fever, cough and sore throat, and died on Wednesday from bird flu virus H5N1, the Cambodian health ministry said in the statement.

Authorities collected samples from 12 people on Thursday who were in contact with the girl.

Her 49-year-old father was the only person among them to test positive, though he is asymptomatic, they added.

Health officials are searching for the source of the outbreak.

Wild birds were found dead at a lake near the girl's remote village.

The disease typically spreads from birds to humans through direct contact.

The World Health Organization called for vigilance after the detection of bird flu in mammals earlier this month, but has stressed that the risk to humans is low.

The latest infection is the 58th recorded instance of bird flu in Cambodia since the country's first human case was discovered nearly two decades ago.

"Tragic though this case in Cambodia is, we expect there to be some cases of clinical disease with such a widespread infection," said University of Cambridge veterinary department head James Wood, referring to recent outbreaks among birds.

"Clearly the virus needs careful monitoring and surveillance to check that it has not mutated or recombined, but the limited numbers of cases of human disease have not increased markedly and this one case in itself

does not signal the global situation has suddenly changed."

Europe has since late 2021 been gripped by its worst-ever outbreak of bird flu, with North and South America also experiencing severe outbreaks.

Tens of millions of domestic poultry worldwide, many with the H5N1 strain, have been culled.

The global outbreak is also responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of wild birds.

The recent detection of the disease in a number of mammals, including foxes, otters, minks, sea lions and even grizzly bears, has sparked concern that humans could be more at risk.

Globally, there have been more than 450 fatal bird flu cases since 2003, according to the WHO.

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Citation: Father of Cambodian girl who died from bird flu tests positive for virus (2023, February 24) retrieved 16 April 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-02-father-cambodian-girl-died-bird.html>

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