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PACIFIC DISASTER MANAGEMENT INFORMATION NETWORK (PDMIN)

1 Jarrett White Rd. MCPA-DM • Tripler AMC, HI 96859-5000
Telephone: 808.433.7035 • Fax: 808.433.1757
PDMIN@coe-dmha.org • <http://coe-dmha.org/apdr>



**ASIA-PACIFIC DISEASE OUTBREAK
/SURVEILLANCE REPORT**

Week of Jan 26, 2004

AFGHANISTAN

Polio Campaign to Reach Five Million Children

The Afghan Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) on Monday launched a three-day child vaccination campaign against polio by deploying 40,000 volunteers across the country. The nationwide campaign will cover every district in the country except a few areas which are not accessible due to heavy snow. Afghanistan is among seven countries in the world along with Nigeria, India, Egypt, Niger, Somali and Pakistan that remain polio-endemic. The country, however is on the way to becoming polio free, having recorded just eight cases last year. MoPH officials said they were expecting to eradicate the virus by the end of 2004. Conducted with the support of the United Nations' Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN's World Health Organization (WHO), teams of vaccinators and monitors are traveling across the country to reach five million children ranging from newborns to five-year-olds. However, importation of polio will remain a risk until the disease is eradicated everywhere.

Source:

· UN OCHA Integrated Regional Information Network, Jan 26, 2004, <http://none>

· Reliefweb, Jan 26, 2004,

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/6686f45896f15dbc852567ae00530132/fb012f04cab716d8c1256e27005bf2d3?OpenDocument>

ASIA

Update on Bird Flu Outbreak in Asia

Asia is coping with an outbreak of bird flu virus that has killed 10 people -- 8 in Vietnam and 2 in Thailand. The following are facts about the outbreak that has spread to Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Taiwan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Laos, and China. Some of these countries have confirmed an outbreak of the H5N1 strain of the virus, which can affect humans, while Taiwan said it had only seen a milder strain, H5N2 [and Pakistan says its strain is H7].

THAILAND [First official notification -- 23 Jan 2004, A/H5N1]

- The virus has killed 2 young boys in Thailand.
- Thailand has the 4th-largest chicken industry in the world, with annual exports worth USD 1.5 billion. It has destroyed around 10 million chickens.
- Japan and the European Union, Thailand's 2 biggest customers, have banned its poultry.
- The industry contributes about one percent to the country's GDP. About 81 000 families rely on the industry for a living. The industry employs hundreds of thousands of

people on 30 000 poultry farms and in related industries, such as animal feed.

VIETNAM [First official notification 9 Jan 2004, A/H5N1]

- 8 people have been confirmed killed by avian flu
- An estimated 3.8 million chickens have been slaughtered or killed by the virus. Not a major exporter of poultry.

SOUTH KOREA [First official notification 12 Dec 2003, AH5N1]

- South Korea has slaughtered almost 2.5 million of its 108 million poultry after finding bird flu in 16 farms since the outbreak was first reported on 10 Dec 2003.
- South Korea's livestock industry makes up around 0.4 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

JAPAN [First official notification 16 Jan 2004, H5N1]

- One farm in Yamaguchi prefecture, southwest Japan, has been hit by an outbreak of bird flu. All the roughly 34 600 chickens on the farm have either died of bird flu or been slaughtered.
- The output of Japan's chicken industry in 2001 was 670 billion yen, around 0.1 percent of the country's gross domestic product that year.

TAIWAN [First reports 15 Jan 2004, Low pathogenic A/H5N2, no official notification required]

- Taiwan is fighting the outbreak of a lesser strain of the avian flu, H5N2. It has slaughtered 55 000 chickens since the flu was discovered earlier in January 2004.
- Taiwan produced chickens and eggs worth T\$37 billion (US\$1.1 billion) in 2002, contributing about 0.4 percent to GDP.

INDONESIA [First rumors 19 Nov 2003; first official confirmation to press, 26 Jan 2004, indicating H5N1]

- Some 4.7 million chickens have died since November 2003. Officials said 40 percent were infected with both avian influenza and Newcastle disease.
- At least 400 farms spread throughout the vast archipelago have been affected by the outbreak.

CAMBODIA [First official notification 24 Jan 2004, A/H5N1]

- The poultry sector in Cambodia is relatively small.

PAKISTAN [First official notification 28 Jan 2004, "H7 strain"]

- The outbreak has killed up to 2 million birds, but officials say the strains detected are less harmful to humans than elsewhere in Asia.

LAOS [First official notification 27 Jan 2004, H5; final identification pending]

- One confirmed outbreak of bird flu. Some 3500 chickens have died close to the capital, Vientiane, since 14 Jan 2004.

CHINA [First official notification 28 Jan 2004, H5N1]

- One outbreak of bird flu confirmed on a farm in southern Guangxi. China has begun slaughtering all fowl within 6 km (4 miles) of a suburban farm in the southern province of Hunan where authorities are investigating the deaths of chickens from suspected bird flu.

A mass slaughter of infected chickens and ducks is the only way of controlling the deadly bird flu sweeping across Asia, according to the World Health Organization. Millions of chickens and ducks have either died from the flu or have been slaughtered under government direction. At a recent crisis meeting in Bangkok, the WHO said mass culling was the key to controlling the outbreak, because a vaccine is at least six months

away. The WHO says it is working with drug companies on a preventive vaccine and hopes to have a prototype of the virus soon that could serve as the basis for a vaccine. While there is no evidence yet of human-to-human transmission, the Asian victims have all been people who handled infected birds, and experts have advised people to avoid going to poultry farms and food markets with live animals. Along with the WHO, two other international agencies -- the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health -- say a mass cull is the best approach. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control has activated its emergency operations center in a bid to assist a global effort to stop the disease.

As bird flu spreads around Asia, experts worry the virus is moving so fast it could mutate enough to allow humans to pass it on to each other. If this happens, it could become a greater health crisis than SARS, they have warned. The WHO has said the virus needs to be taken out of the bird population so it doesn't jump to humans and to migratory birds, which could spread it further. Humans have been infected only in Vietnam and Thailand, although officials in Cambodia said Monday two boys who played with chickens are suspected of having the virus.

Source:

· Reuters via Forbes, Jan 28, 2004, <http://www.forbes.com/business/newswire/2004/01/28/rtr1231271.html>

· Promed Mail, Jan 28, 2004,

http://www.promedmail.org/pls/askus/f?p=2400:1001:8976055342926011041::NO::F2400_P1001_BACK_PAGE,F2400_P1001_PUB_MAIL_ID:1000,24284

· CNN.com/World, Jan 28, 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/01/28/bird.flu/index.html>

BANGLADESH

SUZY Project to Help Children With Diarrhea

Bangladesh will soon become the starting point for an exciting and innovative project with the potential to save the lives of thousands of children worldwide who would otherwise die of diarrhea. The project "Scaling Up Zinc Treatment for Young Children with Diarrhea" (SUZY Project) will be implemented in Bangladesh by ICDDR'B: Centre for Health and Population Research, in cooperation with several partners and with the financial support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. If successful, it will be rolled out globally. The SUZY project's main objective is to make zinc available as a treatment for all children under the age of five when suffering from diarrhea. Sources in the ICDDR'B said that diarrhea, one of the worst diseases in developing countries, is killing nearly two million children every year. Research has shown that zinc provides a very effective treatment for diarrhea, especially among children under five years. Zinc treatment reduces the severity and duration of diarrhea as well as the likelihood of future episodes of diarrhea and the need for hospitalization. Zinc treatment can save a child's life both as a treatment for diarrheal illness and by preventing future infectious illnesses. Though further research is still required, zinc treatment seems to have a positive impact also on pneumonia, which is another of the most common causes of death of children living in developing nations. Therefore, zinc treatment holds tremendous potentials as a global public health intervention.

Source:

· News from Bangladesh, Jan 28, 2004, <http://www.bangladesh-web.com/view.php?hidType=NAT&hidRecord=000000000000000000294>

Bangladesh's Mystery Illness Identified as Viral Encephalitis

A mystery disease that has killed 14 people in the country has been identified as viral encephalitis and has no link to the bird flu that has struck nine other Asian countries.

Physicians are quite sure that it is viral encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), but don't know what strain it is. Doctors in the district are treating patients with antibiotics. Urine and blood samples have been sent to the USA for tests. The official number of cases of this disease is 60, so with 14 officially reported deaths it represents a reported case fatality rate of 23 percent. The disease first came to light 11 days ago. There have been no new cases from the three affected districts, Goalundo, Tangail and Manikganj, for a week and the situation appears to be stabilizing. Officials from the Dhaka office of the World Health Organization and the International Center for Diarrheal Disease and Research are touring the affected areas.

Source:

- Reuters, Jan 28, 2004, <http://www.reuters.co.uk/newsArticle.jhtml?type=healthNews&storyID=4214946&ion=news>
- Promed Mail, Jan 28, 2004, http://www.promedmail.org/pls/askus/f?p=2400:1001:8976055342926011041::NO::F2400_P1001_BACK_PAGE,F2400_P1001_PUB_MAIL_ID:1000,24285
- News from Bangladesh, Jan 28, 2004, <http://www.bangladesh-web.com/view.php?hidType=NAT&hidRecord=000000000000000000276>

CHINA

China Confirms Bird Flu Outbreak

The Chinese government has confirmed an outbreak of the lethal strain of H5N1 bird flu among ducks in the southwestern Chinese province of Guangxi. The World Health Organization earlier said extreme measures would likely be needed to defeat any local outbreak. Guangxi shares a border with Vietnam, where people have died from the deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu. Outbreaks of the H5N1 strain of bird flu have also been confirmed in Indonesia, Japan, South Korea and Cambodia, with weaker strains detected in Pakistan, Taiwan and Laos.

Source:

- Radio Australia, Jan 28, 2004, <http://http://www.abc.net.au/ra>
- Pacific Islands Report, Jan 28, 2004, <http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2004/January/01-28-01.htm>

INDONESIA

Indonesia Confirms Bird Flu

Indonesia has become the seventh Asian country to confirm an outbreak of bird flu. Indonesia's agriculture ministry says two types of bird flu have infected and killed millions of chickens across the country. Almost five million fowls have been killed in Indonesia since November by a combination of the Newcastle disease and avian influenza. However, officials say no humans have so far been reported infected by the disease. Outbreaks of bird flu have also been reported in Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

Source:

- Radio Australia, Jan 26, 2004, <http://www.abc.net.au/ra>
- Pacific Islands Report, Jan 26, 2004, <http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2004/January/01-26-02.htm>

MALAYSIA

4.5 Million Children To Receive Measles Shots

The Health Ministry is aiming to immunize 4.5 million children, ages seven to 15, against measles this year through its National Measles Immunization Campaign. Immunization will be carried out in schools by a health team in each district starting in April. The target groups are children who had missed the first scheduled dosage at the age of nine months, those who had not received effective immunization and those who had once contracted measles. This effort is to prevent a measles epidemic in the future as the current trend of the disease may present a major outbreak in seven or eight years if left unchecked. In 1999, there were 2,068 cases of measles with 10 deaths, while the following year recorded 6,187 cases and seven deaths. Most of the victims were schoolchildren. However, the number of cases had been decreasing with only 606 cases reported last year with no deaths -- immunization had also reduced the cases by up to 75 percent globally. In the past five years, there were an estimated 30 million cases and 875,000 deaths per year worldwide.

Source:

· Utusan Online, Jan 30, 2004,

http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/content.asp?y=2004&dt=0131&pub=Utusan_Express&sec=Discoveries&pg=di_07.htm

Red Tide Predicted Until Middle of Next Month

The 'red tide' phenomenon which renders clams or shellfish dangerous for human consumption is expected to prevail in waters off the Sabah west coast until middle of next month. People are advised against consuming any types of shellfish because sample tests indicate that they contain a high toxic level. The dangerous level is 400 Mouse unit but the tests showed that shellfish taken in Tuaran, Gaya and Kuala Penyu have readings ranging from 500 to 600 Mouse units. All types of fish, prawns and crabs are safe for consumption on condition that precautionary measures are taken by discarding the guts and gills and washing them thoroughly. Dried, canned, bottled or salted fish products are also safe for consumption. Red tide is an occasional natural phenomenon in Sabah where micro-organisms have multiplied to an extent that they impart a rust-red color in the sea when found in large numbers.

Source:

· Utusan Online, Jan 27, 2004,

http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/content.asp?y=2004&dt=0128&pub=Utusan_Express&sec=Discoveries&pg=di_06.htm

PAKISTAN

Leishmaniasis Outbreak in the Sind Province

Hundreds of people in Dadu district are being disfigured by Leishmaniasis, carried by the sandfly which carries the parasite. Lack of proper treatment facilities by health department authorities aggravated the situation in the talukas of Mehar and Johi, which are particularly under attack by the sandfly, which has about 30 species. The insect also transmits the disease to animals through its bite. The sandfly can become infected when taking a blood meal from a reservoir host. The hosts are infected humans, wild animals such as rodents, and domestic animals, such as dogs. Most leishmaniasis species are zoonotic (transmitted to humans from animals), and humans become infected only when accidentally exposed to the natural transmission cycle. However, in the anthroponotic forms (those transmitted from human to human through the sandfly vector), humans are the sole reservoir host. The tiny flies breed in forest areas, caves,

or the burrows of small rodents.

Leishmaniasis presents itself in humans in 4 different forms with a broad range of clinical manifestations. All forms can have devastating consequences. Health department officials said the disease arrived in Dadu district from Afghanistan, where it has existed for years. Occurring in several forms, the disease is generally recognized for its cutaneous form, which causes non-fatal, disfiguring lesions, although epidemics of the potentially fatal visceral form can cause thousands of deaths. The disease can produce large numbers of skin ulcers, as many as 200 in some cases, on the exposed parts of the body, such as the face, arms, and legs, causing serious disability and leaving the patient permanently scarred. Most of the victims lived in the remote villages of the district, but neither have any mobile teams been sent there for the treatment by the health department, nor were public hospitals and rural health centers provided with the medicine needed for its treatment. Unofficial reports said there were more than 200 victims of the disease in Mehar taluka alone. In Johi the number was reportedly far higher. The vaccine on the market is very expensive, so most victims resort to traditional therapies, which include ineffective herbal cures, or to amulets.

Source:

· *Daily Times (Pakistan)*, Jan 23, 2004, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_23-1-2004_pg7_31

· *Promed Mail*, Jan 27, 2004,

http://www.promedmail.org/pls/askus/f?p=2400:1001:3523100620869277904::NO::F2400_P1001_BACK_PAGE,F2400_P1001_PUB_MAIL_ID:1000,24255

PHILIPPINES

Water-Borne Disease Epidemic Could Erupt in Bicol

A region-wide epidemic of water-related diseases could erupt in Bicol if the drinking water problem in the area is not solved soon, according to the local Department of Health. This developed as DoH noted that about a million Bicolanos depend on doubtful water sources. The "doubtful sources" have been identified as open dug wells, pitcher pumps and unimproved springs. *E. coli* (*Escherichia coli*) and other pathogens could easily get into these water sources, which might lead to water contamination. There are about 10,000 water supply sources in Bicol based on the reports of different rural health units. Almost half of the collected water samples submitted for laboratory tests at the regional laboratory, were found positive to *E. coli*, a type of fecal coliform bacteria commonly found in the intestines of animals and humans and is known to cause diseases such as diarrhea, hepatitis and cholera. If not acted upon immediately, this situation could bring another disease outbreak related to contaminated water, like what happened in the early '90s when cholera hit the region. The latest water-borne disease occurred in Sorsogon, where more than 60 persons were affected by Hepatitis A in Casiguran town. Another was a typhoid outbreak in Malilipot town in Albay where a village chief died and about 100 others were hospitalized, also due to contaminated drinking water. For the past two years, cases of diseases arising from contaminated water increased.

Source:

· *Inq7.net*, Jan 26, 2004, http://www.inq7.net/reg/2004/jan/26/reg_6-1.htm

Sorsogon Raises Measles Alert Level

The Sorsogon city government raised the level alarm to "high" as this city continued to battle the spread of measles. The alarm was raised following the visit of the assistant regional director of the Department of Health (DOH) in Bicol, to assess the situation a

child who died of the disease. There are about 12 children, mostly coming from depressed barangays, who have been afflicted with measles. Based on the list of the City Health Office, some 149 cases of viral infection of measles had been registered in this city. The newest record of measles infection came from Purok 8 and 9 of Barangay Sampaloc, one of the depressed areas in this city. Meanwhile, the Sorsogon City Mayor had ordered all city health workers to conduct “active surveillance” in every barangay in the three districts of this city to stop the spread of measles. Under the plan, each household in the city would be placed under close monitoring and each child found to have a higher body temperature or symptoms of the disease would be given immediate attention. City residents are asked to cooperate with local health workers, midwives, nurses and doctors visiting the barangays in the course of their immunization work. Health authorities have discovered that most of the children who died recently of the disease had not been immunized with the antimeasles vaccine.

Source:

· *The Manila Times*, Jan 26, 2004, <http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2004/jan/26/yehey/prov/20040126pro9.html>

THAILAND

Outbreak in the South – Now Bird Flu Nationwide in Thailand

The outbreak of avian influenza officially went nationwide as authorities quarantined an area of the South, the only region previously thought to be unaffected by the virus. Tambon Bang Nai Si, in Takua Pa district of Phangnga province, was placed under quarantine after bird flu was detected in chickens in Ban Tha Jud. About 28,000 chickens were culled, with plans to exterminate a further 100,000 in an effort to prevent the disease from spreading throughout the province. The number of quarantine zones around the country currently stands at 125, which are located in a total of 29 provinces. Ratchaburi, Ang Thong and Surin provinces each had only two infected tambons, while Kalasin, Khon Kaen, Nong Khai, Si Sa Ket, Lampang and Lamphun provinces each had only one. Quarantines had been lifted in Suphan Buri, Kanchanaburi and Nakhon Pathom provinces. About 10 million head of poultry had been slaughtered in the upper half of the country since the outbreak was confirmed. Schools are being told to ensure all chicken and eggs served to students are well cooked.

Source:

· *The Bangkok Post*, Jan 31, 2004, http://www.bangkokpost.com/News/31Jan2004_news07.html

Second Boy Dies of Bird Flu

The second of three people confirmed to have the bird flu died yesterday in a Phitsanulok hospital, while the remaining victim remains in serious condition at a Bangkok hospital. The first victim, a six year old boy from Kanchanaburi, died on Monday from the H5N1 strain of the disease. The second death was another six year old boy, from Sukhothai. The third confirmed case is a seven year old boy from Suphan Buri. Public Health Minister Sudarat Keyuraphan said the boy had little chance of surviving because his lungs had ruptured. In addition to the two boys, five other people are suspected of having died of flu. A further five people are being monitored as suspected cases.

Some early human victims of bird flu may have gone unaccounted for, as local hospitals had not correctly followed specimen collection procedures for laboratory examinations, a senior public health official said yesterday. When the first suspected human cases of bird flu appeared, some hospitals put the patients' phlegm specimens in the wrong

preservative, which failed to keep the germs in the phlegm alive. Others either collected insufficient amounts of phlegm or did not collect it at all. However, it is not known how many cases could have gone unaccounted for because of this “misunderstanding” on the part of the hospitals. Hospitals are now aware of the standard specimen collection procedures and are ensuring that all suspected cases of bird flu go through the laboratory. The blood specimens from the suspects will be tested within 14 days after collection and all specimens will be sent to be double-checked at a World Health Organization lab in Australia.

Source:

- *The Nation*, Jan 28, 2004, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/page.news.php3?clid=3&id=107211&usrsess=1>
- *The Nation*, Jan 28, 2004, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/page.news.php3?clid=3&id=107210&usrsess=1>

Other World News

IRAQ

Encephalitis Cases Increasing in Iraqi Children

There has been an increase in cases of encephalitis in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, over the last two weeks, raising concerns about the state of children's healthcare in the country. Doctors have diagnosed 10 cases of encephalitis over the last two weeks. There is little the doctors can do to contain the outbreak of encephalitis, a viral disease that causes swelling of the brain. Doctors have seen a significant increase in the number of cases since the war ended but it has been hard to treat the virus given the poor condition of Iraqi medical infrastructure. It is also very difficult to diagnose the outbreak because physicians do not have the necessary material. The disease is causing long-term damage to children because it is going untreated. If left untreated, encephalitis causes long-term mental disorders. The virus is spread from droplets, such as saliva, or from blood.

Source:

- UN OCHA Integrated Regional Information Network, Jan 26, 2004, <http://none>
- Reliefweb, Jan 26, 2004, <http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/480fa8736b88bbc3c12564f6004c8ad5/16cabd4c4ebdfbb1c1256e27004a3711?OpenDocument>

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Salmonella Food Poisoning Hits Six States

The Department of Agriculture is warning Americans to cook their meat thoroughly after reports of three-dozen cases of Salmonella food poisoning in six states. The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have recorded 37 cases of Salmonella in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont. Many of the people who have become ill have reported eating ground beef. Some reported eating raw ground beef. Salmonella is caused by bacteria found in raw poultry, eggs, beef and even unwashed fruit — or other foods prepared on the same surface or with the same utensils as tainted products. It can also be contracted from handling pets. People who carry the disease can spread it if they handle food. According to the National Institutes of Health, 1.4 million Americans contract it every year and about 1,000 are believed to die from it annually. The illness is especially dangerous to infants and the elderly, as well as people with suppressed immune systems, such as those undergoing chemotherapy or with AIDS. Usually, the disease is marked by diarrhea, abdominal cramps and fever within three days of eating tainted food. Some people also get chills, a

headache and vomiting. Most cases clear up within a week, according to the NIH. Severe diarrhea can cause dehydration and require hospitalization, and if the infection enters the bloodstream, an antibiotic like ampicillin might be used to treat it. To avoid Salmonella, the USDA recommends freezing or refrigerating food within two hours of taking it off the grill and washing utensils, surfaces and hands often during food preparation. Most important is ensuring that foods are adequately cooked, to kill all bacteria. The color of food is no indication of whether it is "done" or not, the USDA warns. Instead, a meat thermometer should be used to make sure that ground beef is cooked to 160 degrees Fahrenheit. Pork should also reach 160 degrees. Ground poultry must be 170 degrees, and whole poultry 180 degrees. Roasts, steaks and chops of beef, veal, or lamb should reach 145 degrees. NIH further warns consumers to only drink pasteurized milk, avoid foods containing raw eggs (like cookie dough) and not use cracked or dirty eggs.

Source:

· CBS News, Jan 30, 2004, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/01/30/health/main596921.shtml>

New Measures Against Mad Cow Disease Announced

Chicken waste, restaurant scraps and blood products are to be banned from cattle feed as part of new measures to protect Americans from mad cow disease, announced by the Food and Drug Administration. The measures are being taken in response to the discovery of the nation's first case of mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). No humans have been infected, and government officials said the rules are meant to further protect consumers of U.S. beef. Mad cow disease first appeared in Britain in the mid-1980s, and millions of cattle were slaughtered as a result. The disease is linked to a similar form of the incurable and fatal brain-wasting disease in humans, called variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, or vCJD. Mad cow is believed to be spread when cows eat the brain and spinal cord tissues of infected cows. It is thought that humans who eat BSE-infected nervous system tissue can contract vCJD. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 153 cases of vCJD had been reported in the world: 143 in Britain, six in France, and one each in Canada, Ireland, Italy and the United States. The Canadian, Irish and U.S. cases were reported in people who had lived in Britain. U.S. and Canadian authorities banned the use of brain and spinal cord tissue in cattle feed in August 1997. That ban has been one of the main defenses in preventing mad cow disease from entering the human food chain. But after a dairy cow in Washington state tested positive for mad cow disease late last year, the government has implemented even more measures, including banning cow brains and other tissue from entering the human food chain. The new measures go even further and include the following:

- Banning chicken waste, known in the industry as "poultry litter," from livestock feed. Poultry litter consists of bedding, spilled feed, feathers and fecal matter collected from where chickens live.
- Banning meat scraps from restaurants, known as "plate waste," from livestock feed.
- Banning mammalian blood and blood products from being used in livestock feed or dietary supplements.
- Requiring plants that make both livestock feed and feed for other animals to have separate production lines to lessen the possibility of cross-contamination.

Source:

· CNN.com/Health, Jan 26, 2004, <http://cnn.health.printthis.clickability.com>

CDC Warns Bird Flu Could Come From Abroad

In the first warning to U.S. citizens about bird flu, the government urged doctors to ask patients with flu-like symptoms if they have traveled to places in Asia where bird flu has broken out. The goal is to prevent the possible human spread of the virus, although there have been no documented cases of this occurring during the Asian outbreak. If doctors find that patients with flu symptoms have been in Vietnam or other places with bird flu, they should test for the virus. If it turns out they have influenza A, then state and local health departments working with CDC can check further to see if it is the H5N1 bird flu strain. People who travel to areas with outbreaks should stay away from poultry farms, live animal markets or any surfaces contaminated with bird droppings. Experts suspect the disease can be passed person to person, since that occurred during a similar outbreak in Hong Kong in 1997. The ultimate fear is that someone will catch the bird flu while already infected with the ordinary human flu virus. The two viruses might swap genes, creating a mutant that could spread easily with disastrous results. Considering the millions of chickens infected with the virus, spread to humans appears to be rare. There is no indication so far for a travel alert or advisory for Americans going to areas affected by the outbreak. According to the CDC, outbreaks of H5N1 flu have been reported among poultry in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Myanmar, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. Another strain of the disease has been seen in wild flocks or poultry in Laos, Pakistan and Taiwan.

Source:

· ABC News, Jan 27, 2004, <http://printerfriendly.abcnews.com/printerfriendly/Print?fetchFromGLUE=true&GLUEService=ABCNewsCom>

WORLD

SARS Genetic Adaptations During Outbreak

Chinese scientists have traced how the SARS virus genetically evolved during last year's massive outbreak, fine-tuning itself in ways that may have spurred the spread of the deadly respiratory illness. The work provides more evidence that SARS jumps from animals to humans, possibly frequently. And it suggests that prompt control of new cases is crucial, before viral strains have much time to adapt to people. A lesson from the study is to stop SARS early before it spreads in humans. The consortium's research, which genetically fingerprinted virus samples from several dozen infected people and animals from China and Hong Kong, is being published in Friday's edition of the journal Science. Severe acute respiratory syndrome emerged in southern China in late 2002 and went on to sicken more than 8,000 people worldwide before subsiding last June. In that time, it killed nearly 800 people. Civet cats are the top suspect for first spreading the disease to people. Thousands have been slaughtered as a preventive measure. But scientists don't know whether some other animals, perhaps rodents who live in the same markets, are the ultimate source of SARS and infected both civets and people at the same time. Determining SARS' natural reservoir is a top research goal. The study suggests that the outbreak was not caused by a single species jump. Instead, 11 people apparently were independently infected in the Pearl River Delta area of Guangdong Province beginning in November 2002 - patients whose virus seems identical to viral samples found in some captive civets. The paper indicates that the virus has jumped from the palm civet into the human more than once. Then came what the Chinese researchers dubbed the outbreak's "middle phase," 130 cases beginning

in January 2003, most caught in a single hospital. SARS underwent rapid genetic changes between November and the hospital-based infection, the study found, suggesting the mutations made person-to-person spread easier. One of those mutated strains came to dominate the outbreak. The Chinese researchers linked that strain's first appearance to a patient who got sick in February - and whose doctor a few days later traveled to Hong Kong and spread the virus in the Metropole Hotel, the launching pad for global spread. Then, mutations slowed for the remainder of the outbreak. But last month, China reported the first of three new suspected SARS cases, and that patient was analyzed in the new study, too. His strain is much more similar to SARS found in civets than to any yet-documented human infection, the Science paper concludes. This does not prove that a civet infected the man, but, makes the continual looking for a reservoir host important. It also states that these kinds of transmissions may not be rare.

Source:

· Utusan Online, Jan 29, 2004,

http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/content.asp?y=2004&dt=0130&pub=Utusan_Express&sec=Discoveries&pg=di_05.htm

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