

IEIP & GDD Partners Brief



Collaborative Effort Documents Low Risk of Avian Influenza Infection

Partners of IEIP and GDD made headlines recently when their seroepidemiologic study showing low avian influenza (AI) infection rates among Thai poultry farmers was accepted for publication. The study authors, led by Dr. Soawapak Hinjoy of the Bureau of Epidemiology, found that none of the 322 participants met the WHO criteria for infection, despite exposure to poultry flocks culled during extensive AI outbreaks in Southeast Asia in 2004. The farmers were tested for antibodies to AI subtype H5N1 by microneutralization assay.

Along with molecular surveillance that has shown little mutation in the AI viruses in Thailand, these results support that H5N1 is not easily transmitted to humans. The study was supported by MOPH's Department of Disease Control, with assistance from IEIP. It will appear in the March 2008 issue of *Emerging Infectious Diseases*.

- Mark Simmerman

IEIP Microbiology Project Helps Detect *Ralstonia* Outbreak

Modern blood culture systems found a small outbreak of *Ralstonia pickettii* in renal patients at an IEIP-supported project in Sa Kaeo Province last September.

The patients, all with chronic kidney disease, developed fever and chills while undergoing dialysis. In consultation with IEIP and the Sa Kaeo Provincial Health Office, the hospital's Infection Control Team conducted an epidemiological investigation. Findings confirmed contamination of the hemodialysis water supply. After the machine was sterilized, no additional cases were identified.

All of the patients have recovered. Normally, *Ralstonia pickettii*, a gram negative bacterium, is found in soil and water, although previous outbreaks have implicated contaminated solutions and oxygen delivery devices as infection sources.

- Sathapana Naorat, Possawat Jorakate



The presence of Ralstonia pickettii, a gram negative bacterium, was traced to the hemodialysis water supply.

Animal and Human Health Agencies to Team Up at Workshop

Avian influenza has received considerable attention recently, but it isn't the only zoonotic disease requiring a coordinated response plan. IEIP, along with the Thailand National Institute of Animal Health, Department of Disease Control, and NIH, aims to bring together officials from animal and human health agencies to identify current gaps in resources, collaboration, and communication for controlling persistent or re-emerging zoonoses.

A workshop in Bangkok to clearly define communication

channels and complementary roles is planned for May 2008. Funding and technical support will come from CDC's National Center for Zoonotic, Vector-borne, and Enteric Diseases.

An estimated 75% of emerging infections are zoonotic, including rabies, anthrax, brucellosis, and many foodborne infections. Studies suggest that interventions directed at animals to prevent or control such diseases can be both beneficial to human health and cost effective.

- George Watt, Kip Baggett



CDC's Dr. Kate Glynn and Ms. Jacqueline Allen toured the Thai National Institute of Animal Health with IEIP staff, before a meeting to plan the May 2008 zoonotic disease response workshop.

Major Flu Training Targets First Responders among CDC Staff

IEIP and GDD – Thailand hosted an avian/pandemic influenza rapid response team training in September for all CDC expatriate personnel throughout Central, Southeast, and East Asia. The workshop, which drew 50 participants, covered recent science and policy. Attendees may be the first U.S. Government representatives to respond in the event of an avian influenza outbreak in humans.

In addition to investigation and surveillance case studies, the training covered human case management, personal protective equipment and infection control, nonpharmaceutical interventions, ethical issues in avian influenza, risk communications, and laboratory issues.

CDC's Influenza Division developed the curriculum, in partnership with the CDC/COGH Division of Epidemiology and Surveillance Capacity Development.

- Myron Wettrich