

Briefing on the initial stage of HPAI Control in Mainland, China

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The first HPAI case in China was confirmed in Long'an County of Guangxi Province on January 27th, 2004. Afterwards, 49 cases consecutively occurred in 16 mainland provinces, while 143,100 poultry were affected by the disease, 127,600 died and 9.0163 million culled. Till March 19th, 2004 there have been no new epidemic reports in China for 32 consecutive days. And cordons on epidemic areas have been lifted. HPAI has been effectively controlled, no human infection has been reported and the production and living of the people have been restored to normal. All of these mark the success for the initial stage of HPAI Control in China.

The Chinese Government attached great importance to HPAI prevention and control. The State Council has established the *National HPAI Prevention and Control Headquarter*, which coordinated and commanded prevention and control work in a unified manner across China, while local governments also timely set up corresponding steering agencies to organize the culling, prevention and control of the epidemic. The basic experience of HPAI prevention and control in China can be summarized as: strong leadership, close coordination, firm reliance on science and laws, prevention and control by mobilizing the masses and decisive intervention. Major measures adopted include the following:

1. Emergent arrangement was made and contingency plan was formulated and initiated timely.

The Chinese Government promulgated the *National Contingency Plan for HPAI*, which clarifies epidemic reporting, confirmation, grading, contingency commanding

system, responsibilities of departments, control measures and guarantee measures. The *Technical Standards for Handling HPAI Epidemic* was formulated, which regulated the diagnosis of HPAI and culling of poultry, bio-safety disposal, sealing off of epidemic areas, disinfection and protection of personnel.

2. Epidemic was controlled in the epidemic spot so as to strictly prevent the disease from spreading further

In areas where the epidemic occurred, all fowls within 3 kilometers radius of the epidemic spot were culled and bio-safety disposal was implemented; compulsory vaccination was carried out within 5 kilometers surrounding the epidemic area; all trading markets of poultry and its products within 10 kilometers surrounding the epidemic areas were closed down, and large-scale disinfection was undertaken in the epidemic spot, epidemic areas and areas at the risk of the epidemic. Active prevention works were carried out in non-epidemic area; disinfection was strengthened; monitoring of epidemic and quarantine and supervision over live poultry and its products were reinforced to prevent importation of the epidemic. Meanwhile, examination and inspection of related goods at entry-exit ports were strengthened; importation of poultry and its products from countries and regions where the epidemic occurred was ceased; the strike on smuggling in trade activities in frontier areas was strengthened. Exportation of poultry and its products of the epidemic areas was also suspended.

3. Science and technology research to tackle the epidemic were strengthened while relying on science and technology for a good job in prevention and control.

In 1997 when HPAI broke out in Hong Kong SAR, the Chinese Government immediately organized experts of multiple disciplines to research on the prevention and control technologies. H5N2 weak virus strain was imported from international reference laboratories. In line with the requirements of OIE, research on diagnosis

reagent and vaccine production technologies was undertaken so as to provide production and technology reserves. This year, after the occurrence of the epidemic in the mainland, research on, production and approval of new vaccines has been accelerated, and two new vaccines of international advanced level produced through gene engineering were approved for production.

4. Input was increased and supportive policies were implemented in poultry industry.

The Chinese government subsidizes culling and compulsory vaccination. Epidemic surveillance and prevention system development has been strengthened; material reserve for epidemic prevention has been increased and necessary gears were equipped. Meanwhile, support to poultry farming and processing enterprises was strengthened and favorable policies in loan, discount interest rate and taxation were implemented.

5. Dissemination and popularization of scientific knowledge was reinforced to increase the awareness of the public about prevention and control of the disease

Expert groups were organized to go to epidemic areas and key production areas to actively engage in technical consultation, exchange and training. Various information dissemination activities were carried out to strengthen the awareness of the public about HPAI prevention. According to surveys, 98.6% of farmers were informed of the HPAI, while 77.2% of farmer households responded that they were aware of the symptoms of HPAI, and 90% of farmer households knew that HPAI had the risk of transmitting to human.

Through adoption of various integrated prevention and control measures, at present, HPAI has been completely wiped out in Mainland China, and success for the initial stage has been achieved.

We should, however, clearly recognize that the situation is still grave for disease prevention and control. In light of the spreading patterns of animal epidemics, we may suffer a relapse of HPAI unless preventive measures were strengthened. It is because, a) there are still water fowls that carry the virus; b) with the weather warming up in most parts of the north, migratory birds will fly northwards on a large scale, which may result in spread of the pathogen; c) there will be more chances for trans-regional spread of the disease as there will be more long distance transportation of poultry and substantial replenishment of birds in poultry production; d) the disease still exists in some countries or regions surrounding China, hence the risk of the disease spreading into China exists; e) the tremendous difficulty encountered in disease prevention and control has not been overcome at the root since the poultry production in China is a large industry covering extension areas and many places suffer from poor conditions for disease control. Therefore, relevant departments and local governments are closely monitoring the epidemic, undertaking epidemiological studies in the 49 epidemic spots and monitoring the epidemic in key areas so as to prevent resurgence of the disease.

In the future, I will continue to timely inform OIE of HPAI prevention and control in China and I hope that exchanges and cooperation with OIE will be intensified accordingly.