



AVA SUSPENDS IMPORTS FROM ONE DUCK FARM IN PERAK FOR SUSPECTED AVIAN INFLUENZA INFECTION

1 The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) has found a suspected Avian Influenza (AI) infection of low pathogenicity (i.e. low ability to cause disease) in a consignment of healthy ducks imported from a farm in Perak. AVA has suspended further imports from the farm as a precautionary measure.

2 AVA would like to assure the public that the detection of a suspect “H5” subtype infection in the consignment is not of public health significance. The consignment was imported on 28 Jul 2004 and the ducks were healthy and did not show any signs of disease. They were sampled for testing under AVA’s routine monitoring programme. Following virus isolation, the tests showed a suspect “H5” subtype infection of low pathogenicity. Further confirmatory tests are being carried out.

3 There are many AI virus subtypes, known as “H” and “N” subtypes. AI viruses are also commonly found in healthy waterfowls, such as ducks, which are natural carriers of AI viruses. These viruses will not cause any disease in these carrier birds. AVA had previously found “H5” subtypes infection in ducks imported from Malaysia in 1997 and 1998. No action was taken against those imports then as they did not pose a public health risk.

4 Nonetheless, in view of the AI situation in the region, AVA has suspended further exports of ducks from the affected farm with immediate effect. This is an added precaution to minimise the risk of exposure of any AI virus to our local poultry farms. AVA has informed the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) of Malaysia of the finding. DVS has quarantined the farm concerned and is investigating. So far, DVS’s tests on samples taken from 400 ducks in the affected farm have not found “H5” subtype infection.

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5 Singapore continues to be free from bird flu. Since the outbreaks of AI in the region, AVA has stepped up precautionary measures to prevent the disease from entering Singapore. These measures have been maintained. There are strict controls at points of entry where physical inspection is carried out and samples are taken from every imported live poultry consignment. The local poultry farms are bio-secured and bird-proofed. There is also close surveillance at the local farms and the poultry slaughterhouses. In addition, wild birds present in Singapore are tested, and so far no bird flu virus has been found in these birds.

6 AVA wishes to assure that poultry and poultry products sold locally are safe for consumption.

**Issued by Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority
Ministry of National Development
on 3 August 2004**

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