

AVA manages the free-roaming chicken population for public health and safety

[Forum reply] AVA concerned about bird flu risk, not noise of chickens

## AVA concerned about bird flu risk, not noise of chickens

We thank all writers who have shared their views on the management of free-roaming chickens, and would like to clarify the Agri-food and Veterinary Authority's position on the matter.

One of AVA's responsibilities is to ensure that Singapore is kept free from animal diseases that pose a threat to public health.

In this regard, AVA needs to carry out surveillance work to detect and control diseases early.

There is clear scientific evidence that chickens are very susceptible to the bird flu virus and can, in turn, transmit the disease to humans. This was indeed what happened when the region was struck with bird flu in 2004.

That is why the World Animal Health Organisation and Food and Agriculture Organisation in 2004 specifically mentioned the need to manage free-range chickens, so as to control bird flu at source.

Keeping poultry in a bio-secured environment is one of the measures recommended.

The risk of free-roaming chickens in Singapore being exposed to bird flu is real and significant, as we are one of the stopover nodes for migratory wild birds. Hence, these chickens can catch the disease through direct contact with wild birds or through their droppings.

In a recent bird flu outbreak in Denmark, investigations found that the outbreak started because of

contact between wild birds and free-roaming chickens.

There have also been cases of bird flu outbreaks around the world where human infection was linked to direct or indirect exposure to infected poultry.

The various media reports may have given the impression that AVA is taking action solely because of complaints of noise. But that is not the case.

AVA's concern is not about noise but about public health and safety. The noise issues only serve to bring attention to the relatively high numbers of free-roaming chickens in certain areas, which in turn raise the exposure risk to bird flu in these localities.

We recognise the views expressed by different stakeholders and will continue to explore various options to manage the free-roaming chicken population in Singapore.

We are also continuing our research studies on the risks of a bird flu outbreak in Singapore, to better understand how the disease may start and spread through the free-roaming chicken population here, and what measures are needed to reduce public health risks.

We seek the understanding of all Singaporeans as we go about this work to keep our nation and our people safe.

**Yap Him Hoo (Dr)**

Director-General

Agri-food and Veterinary Authority

[Forum reply] Chickens culled because of bird-flu risk, not noise: AVA

## Chickens culled because of bird-flu risk, not noise: AVA

**SINGAPORE** – It is not complaints of noise, but the risk of exposure to bird flu that prompted the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) to cull free-roaming chickens

in areas where there are “relatively high numbers” of them, the authority said yesterday in a letter to TODAY's Voices page.

Dr Yap Him Hoo, director-general of the AVA, said, “The noise issues only serve to bring attention to the relatively high numbers of free-roaming chicken in certain areas, which in turn raise the exposure risk to bird flu in these localities.” He added that “various media reports” may have given the impression that the AVA is taking action solely because of complaints of noise, but that is not the case.

It was reported early this month that the AVA had put down the chickens around Thomson View and Blocks 452 to 454 Sin Ming Avenue, after receiving 20 complaints from residents last year, most of them related to noise.

Dr Yap said that the risk of free-roaming chickens being exposed to bird flu is significant here, because Singapore is one of the stopover nodes for migratory wild birds: “This means that the chickens on our island can catch the disease through direct contact with wild birds or even through their droppings ... There is clear scientific evidence that chickens are very susceptible to the bird-flu virus, and (they) can in turn transmit the disease to humans. This was indeed what happened when the region was struck with bird flu in 2004.”

答复

## 管制野鸡数目是为了公众健康与安全

**感**谢《联合早报·交流站》读者对野鸡的处理所提出的意见。我们在此澄清农粮局的立场。

农粮局的职责之一，是确保与动物或植物相关的疾病，不会构成对新加坡公众健康的威胁。因此，我们必须进行监控工作，提早发现和控制疾病，不让它们传播开来。

科学证据明确地显示，鸡只很容易感染禽流感并把它传给人类。2004年区域爆发禽流感时的情况便是如此。这也是为什么世界动物卫生组织（OIE）和联合国粮食及农业组织（FAO）在发表对抗2004年禽流感联合声明时，特别提到必须管制放养的鸡，以便在源头控制禽流感。把家禽安置在生物安全的环境，也

是OIE预防禽流感来袭的建议之一。

本地野鸡感染禽流感的风险是真实和严重的，因为新加坡是野鸟迁徙时的一个停留点。也就是说，这里的鸡只可以因为直接与野鸟或它们的粪便接触而感染禽流感。对丹麦最近爆发的禽流感的调查显示，野鸟和野鸡的接触是原因。

在世界其他爆发禽流感的地方，人类受感染的主要原因，同直接或间接接触受感染家禽有关。比如，近月来，中国与越南皆有人类因同受感染鸡只近距离接触，例如在活家禽市场或使用野鸡准备餐食时，而受到感染的报道。

媒体的报道可能让人误以为农粮局采取行动，纯粹是因为野鸡带来的噪音

问题。事实并非如此。农粮局关注的不是噪音，而是公众健康与安全。噪音问题只是让人们注意到一些地方野鸡的数目相对的高，而这也提高了这些地方出现禽流感的风险。

我们理解不同利益相关者的看法，也会继续探讨管制野鸡数目的不同方法。我们也会继续对新加坡爆发禽流感的风险进行研究，更好的了解禽流感在怎么样的情况下可能爆发，和通过本地的野鸡传播开来，及必须采取什么措施来减少对公共健康的威胁。在进行这些工作以确保国家和人民安全时，我们希望国人能够谅解。

新加坡农粮兽医局

总监

叶钦赋医生