



**AGRI-FOOD & VETERINARY AUTHORITY
AND IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY
JOINT NEWS RELEASE**

**Two Vietnamese sentenced to six months imprisonment for smuggling
songbirds and animal cruelty**

Issued on 29 December 2016

Two Vietnamese were each sentenced to six months imprisonment today for smuggling 12 Chinese Hwamei (*Garrulax canorus*) into Singapore. The two men were also sentenced to four months imprisonment for subjecting the birds to unnecessary pain or suffering. Both sentences have been backdated to 15 December 2016 and will run concurrently.

2 On 9 December 2016, the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) was notified by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) on the detection of 12 live birds in passengers' luggage bags, which arrived on a flight from Vietnam to Singapore. The birds were concealed in white plastic containers and covered with personal belongings in two luggage bags. The two Vietnamese men were detained, and the birds and luggage bags were seized for AVA's investigation.



Caption: The birds were concealed in plastic containers (measuring 21cm x 6.5cm x 6.5cm) and covered with personal belongings in luggage bags. (Photo: AVA)

3 AVA's investigation identified the birds to be Chinese Hwamei, a protected species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Our investigation found that the birds had been confined for approximately twelve hours in the plastic containers without food and water. One of the birds did not survive.



Caption: One of the smuggled Chinese Hwamei birds was found dead. (Photo: AVA)

4 As part of the investigation, the remaining 11 birds were tested for avian influenza. One of the birds was found positive for antibodies against Influenza A virus (H3N8). This means that the bird was exposed to the virus before its arrival in Singapore. As a precautionary measure, the bird was euthanized and the remaining 10 birds are being monitored in quarantine for signs of exotic or zoonotic diseases.

Public advisory

5 The Singapore Government has zero tolerance on the use of Singapore as a conduit to smuggle endangered species. Animals that are smuggled into Singapore are of unknown health status and may introduce exotic diseases, into the country. Singapore is one of the few countries in the region free from bird flu. AVA maintains its bird flu-free status through strict import regulations and enforcement.

6 For example, ornamental birds can only be imported from countries that are free from bird flu, and must undergo a 21-day pre-export isolation in the country of export. The birds must be tested free from bird flu before import. Upon arrival in Singapore, the birds are checked again for clinical signs of diseases, and samples are taken for bird flu, amongst other diseases.

7 The importation of any animals or birds without an AVA permit is illegal and carries a maximum penalty of \$10,000 and/or imprisonment of up to one year. Importation of any CITES-protected species, including their parts and products, without a CITES permits is also an offence. Offenders can be fined up to \$50,000 per scheduled species (not exceeding a maximum aggregate of \$500,000) and/or up to two years imprisonment. In addition, if the animals or birds were subjected to unnecessary suffering or pain, the offender may also be liable, on conviction, to a maximum fine of \$10,000 and/or imprisonment for a term of up to 12 months.

8 Our borders are our first line of defence in safeguarding Singapore's safety and security. The security checks are critical to our nation's security. Agencies will continue to conduct security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle in undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contrabands. The ICA and AVA would like to remind travellers not to bring animals, birds and insects into Singapore without a proper permit. The public can refer to AVA's [website](#) or download AVA's mobile app, SG TravelKaki (available free-of charge from [iTunes](#) and the [Google Play store](#)), for more information on bringing back animals from overseas.

**ISSUED BY THE AGRI-FOOD & VETERINARY AUTHORITY AND THE
IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY**

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Frequently asked questions

1. *What is Influenza A virus (H3N8)? Is it contagious or lethal to humans or birds?*

Influenza A virus (H3N8) is a low pathogenic virus that can infect a wide range of animal species, e.g. horses, birds and dogs.

To date, there is no scientific evidence of human infection by Influenza A virus (H3N8).

2. *If the bird was exposed to the virus prior to arrival, could it have transmitted the virus to the other birds?*

The remaining 10 birds are being monitored in quarantine for signs of exotic or zoonotic diseases.

Currently, there is no evidence of the virus in the remaining 10 birds.

3. *I'm a pet bird owner, should I be concerned? How can I protect my pet bird from bird flu?*

Singapore is free from bird flu and AVA has put in place preventive measures to keep the disease out of Singapore. You could also do your part in protecting your pet bird from diseases other than bird flu, by not allowing it to come into contact with birds of unknown health status, such as wild birds.