

No person-to-person spread of bird flu yet

March 23 2007

The H5N1 avian flu virus has been found in 11 countries this year and is endemic in Indonesia, Egypt and Nigeria, an international conference in Italy reported.

The 400 experts gathered in Verona said there is no sign yet that the deadly strain has mutated to allow person-to-person infection, the Italian news agency ANSA said. The disease has killed scores of people worldwide but almost all have been shown to have been infected through contact with domestic birds.

One of the key issues for discussion is how to use vaccination to keep the disease from spreading.

Stefano Marangon, who heads an Italian research center, said that the H5N1 virus has been found in only a few birds in Italy, even though the country is a major route for birds migrating between Africa and Northern Europe.

While the bird flu experts were meeting in Verona, another group of animal health experts at a conference in Vienna got the chance to examine devices aimed at speeding the work of diagnosing avian influenza.

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