

Hong Kong bird tests positive for H5N1

March 6 2009

Hong Kong authorities said Friday that a dead chicken found in the southern Chinese territory had tested positive for the deadly H5N1 strain of the bird flu virus.

The government said laboratory tests had confirmed that the chicken found floating in the sea off Hong Kong on March 2 carried the deadly strain.

The statement said there were no poultry farms within three kilometres (two miles) of where the dead bird was found, but warned farmers to be on their guard against the disease.

Hong Kong was the scene of the world's first reported major H5N1 bird flu outbreak among humans, in 1997, when six people died.

At least a dozen birds found in different parts of the territory have tested positive in recent weeks for the H5N1 strain of the virus, which can be fatal to humans.

In December, authorities found H5N1 in a chicken at a poultry farm in Hong Kong, prompting the slaughter of more than 90,000 birds.

Around 250 people have died of the human form of avian flu since 2003, according to the World Health Organisation.

Most had close contact with sick birds, but scientists fear the virus could mutate into a form that would spread rapidly among humans, causing a

pandemic.

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