

Egyptian toddler contracts bird flu

April 3 2009

An Egyptian toddler has contracted bird flu, the 62nd recorded case since the first outbreak of the disease in the country in 2006 and the second this week, state-news agency MENA reported on Friday.

Hassan Gamil Hassan, 21 months old, was hospitalised on Wednesday in the northern province of Beheira with a higher fever, MENA quoted the health ministry as saying.

A two-year-old was taken to hospital in Beheira on Monday. He had been exposed to dead fowl thought to have been infected with the virus.

Twenty-three people have died of [bird flu](#) in [Egypt](#). Most of the victims have been young girls or women, who are generally in charge of looking after [poultry](#) in rural areas.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) called last month for an investigation into why many of the victims have been young children.

Egypt hosted an international conference on bird flu in October, when Washington pledged an additional 320 million dollars to the fight against the disease amid fears it may yet escalate into a global pandemic.

The H5N1 strain of the virus that is most dangerous to humans first emerged in Asia in 2003 and has since caused nearly 250 deaths, according to WHO figures.

Scientists fear that a mutation of the bird flu virus resulting in a strain

easily transmitted among humans could create a pandemic, potentially affecting up to one-fifth of the world's population.

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