

Vietnam, Cambodia report bird flu deaths

January 19 2012, By TRAN VAN MINH , Associated Press

(AP) -- Vietnam on Thursday confirmed its first human death from bird flu in nearly two years, a day after neighboring Cambodia also logged its first fatality this year as new cases of the H5N1 virus are reported in Asia and the Middle East.

Both deaths appear to be linked to contact with poultry, and no human-to-human transmission is suspected. Other human [bird flu](#) cases have been reported recently in Indonesia, Egypt and China. Outbreaks typically flare among poultry stocks during the winter flu months, often resulting in a spate of human cases.

In Vietnam, test results confirmed that an 18-year-old Vietnamese man died of the disease Monday after being hospitalized a day earlier, said Dang Thi Thanh of southern Kien Giang province's health department.

She said the man was working at a duck farm in neighboring Can Tho City when he fell sick with a [high fever](#) and [breathing problems](#). His house has been disinfected and those who were in contact with him remain under surveillance.

No sick or dead poultry have been reported on the two farms where the man worked or among neighboring flocks, but samples have been collected for analysis and the farms have been disinfected, said Huynh Thi Khai Hoan, an animal health officer in Can Tho City. However, many of the ducks on the farms where the man worked had already been sold.

In Cambodia, a 2-year-old boy died Wednesday after developing symptoms Jan. 3. He was reportedly in contact with sick poultry in his village, according to the [World Health Organization](#). The country's last death occurred in August.

The virus rarely infects humans and usually only those who come in direct contact with diseased poultry, but experts fear it will mutate into a new form that passes easily from person to person.

The WHO says that globally there have been 341 human deaths from 578 confirmed bird [flu cases](#) since 2003. About 60 of those deaths occurred in Vietnam.

Before Monday, Vietnam had not seen a human bird flu death since April 2010, according to the Ministry of Health's Preventive Medicine Department.

The government has called for stepped-up efforts to fight bird flu as a massive movement of people and poultry begins ahead of the Lunar New Year festivities, which start next week.

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