

Bird flu claims fifth Cambodian victim this year

February 8 2013

A five-year-old Cambodian girl has died from bird flu, bringing the country's toll from the deadly virus to five so far this year, the World Health Organization said on Friday.

The girl, from the southern province of Takeo, died on Thursday in hospital and tests confirmed that she had contracted the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, the WHO said in a joint statement with the Cambodian health ministry.

She had come into contact with poultry prior to becoming sick, the statement said.

Cambodia has recorded 27 cases of H5N1 since 2003, all but three of them fatal. Four Cambodians, including a 17-month-old girl, died from the strain last month.

The virus has killed 365 people worldwide since a major outbreak in 2003, according to WHO statistics.

It typically spreads from birds to humans through direct contact, but experts fear it could mutate into a form easily transmissible between humans, with the potential to trigger a pandemic.

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