

# Bird flu kills 12th person in Cambodia this year

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A 2-year-old girl has become the 12th person to die of bird flu in Cambodia this year, authorities said Monday.

The girl died from the H5N1 bird flu virus on Oct. 26 after suffering from fever, difficulty in breathing and lethargy, the country's Health Ministry and the World Health Organization said in a joint statement.

The statement said that an investigation at the girl's village in the western province of Pursat revealed that two months before her illness, poultry had died suddenly at her grandparents' house, where she often stayed.

The H5N1 virus normally spreads between poultry, but can sometimes spread from poultry to humans.

The numbers of confirmed human cases and deaths from bird flu in Cambodia this year are the highest since the disease surfaced in 2003. Of the 44 cases confirmed in the country, 23 have occurred this year.

Minister of Health Man Bunheng said in the statement that children were at particular high risk for catching the disease because they like playing with animals. Thirty-three of the total number of cases have been children under age 14.

"Children often care for domestic poultry by feeding them, cleaning pens and gathering eggs," the minister said. "Children may also have closer contact with poultry as they often treat them as pets and also seem

to be the most vulnerable ... because they like to play where poultry are found."

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