

Boy becomes Cambodia's first bird flu death of year

February 12 2014

An eight-year-old boy has died from bird flu in Cambodia, the country's first confirmed fatality from the deadly virus this year, a health official said Wednesday.

The boy's two-year-old sister also died on the same day after showing symptoms of H5N1 but officials could not carry out tests before her death to confirm if she had the virus, said Sok Touch of the Ministry of Health.

He said the siblings, who died hours apart at the same hospital on Friday, had come into contact with poultry before they fell sick in their village in eastern Kratie province.

"We are appealing to the people to be vigilant (about [bird flu](#)) because the virus can still be found in poultry in the country," he added.

Authorities in the impoverished kingdom have struggled to control [bird flu outbreaks](#) in Cambodia, which recorded 14 deaths from the illness last year, the deadliest outbreak of the virus in the country since 2003.

The virus has killed hundreds of people worldwide since a major outbreak in 2003, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

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.

Cambodian children are at particular risk as they often live in close proximity to poultry, according to health authorities.

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