

China 2014 bird flu toll rises to nearly 100

April 11 2014

Almost 100 people in China died from the H7N9 bird flu strain in the first three months of the year, but the number of both fatalities and infections declined in March, government figures showed.

A total of 24 people died from the disease in March, the National Health and Family Planning Commission said in monthly figures for infectious disease, down from 41 in February and 31 in January. The total number of deaths for the period is 96.

The number of new infections reported in March fell sharply to 24 from 99 in February and 127 in January, the data showed earlier this week, giving a total of 250 cases.

Last year China recorded 46 deaths and 144 cases in the H7N9 outbreak, which started early in 2013 and returned in the autumn.

The virus ignited fears that it could possibly mutate to become easily transmissible between people, which might threaten to trigger a [global pandemic](#).

But Chinese officials and the World Health Organization say there is no evidence of sustained human-to-human transmission, despite sporadic cases of apparent infection between family relatives.

Experts have pointed to a seasonal rise in cases so far this year, thought to be linked to cold weather.

China has responded to the current outbreak by clamping down on live poultry markets and stepping up monitoring of people with symptoms associated with the virus.

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Citation: China 2014 bird flu toll rises to nearly 100 (2014, April 11) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-04-china-bird-flu-toll.html>

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