

Indonesian bird flu toll rises to 44

8 August 2006

Indonesian health officials say the deaths of two teenagers have brought the toll from avian influenza to 44.

One of the victims, a 16-year-old boy, died Monday, while a 16-year-old girl died Tuesday, the BBC reported. Only the boy's case has been confirmed as infection with the H5N1 strain of avian influenza by the World Health Organization.

WHO said that the boy had contact with infected children in his household and with infected poultry.

Indonesia has been one of the countries most affected by the H5N1 strain, which was first detected in 2003 and has killed 130 people worldwide. Most of the deaths have been in Southeast Asia, but there have also been several in China and the virus has spread to the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

The total number of confirmed cases of bird flu in humans is now 55 in Indonesia. The country also has one of the few suspected instances of human-to-human transmission although health officials believe that case was a fluke and not a sign that the virus has mutated.

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