



Disease status in the sub-region

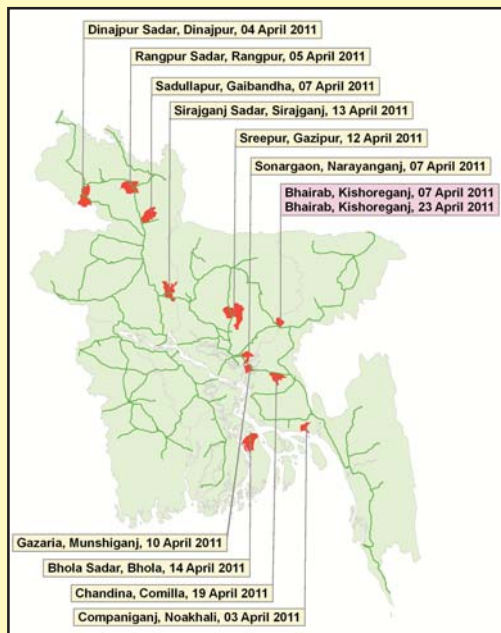
During the month of March and April 2011, outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in poultry were reported at new locations in Bangladesh and India. The clade of HPAI H5N1 virus was 2.3.2 both in Bangladesh and India. This new clade of virus, after appearing first in 2010 in South Asia in Nepal has now been recorded in all the three countries of Indo-Gangetic plains spreading over Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

Other than this, no other significant highly pathogenic emerging disease was reported from the countries in South Asia.

Resurging HPAI outbreaks in Bangladesh

Government of Bangladesh notified 87 and 12 outbreaks, in various locations in the country in March and April 2011, respectively (map). So far, 159 outbreaks have been notified in 2011. This is the second highest peak of outbreaks after the first incidence of the disease reported in 2007. Comparatively during the same period in 2008 (Jan-April), a total of 217 outbreaks were reported.

Fewer outbreaks were reported in 2009 and 2010. A new clade of HPAI H5N1 virus (2.3.2) has been isolated from a dead crow. This clade of virus was not earlier recorded in Bangladesh. Two cases of human infection were confirmed as being infected with A (H5N1) virus by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), Dhaka, Bangladesh.



Map courtesy Avian Influenza Technical Unit, FAO Bangladesh

HPAI outbreak in India

The Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Government of India reported to OIE about the occurrence of one outbreak of HPAI in a state poultry farm at Gandhigram, near Agartala in Tripura, the

North Eastern state of India bordering Bangladesh. Out of a total of 10,550 birds, 380 birds died and were diagnosed as cases of HPAI H5N1 virus. Interestingly, in February 2011 the disease had affected a state duck and poultry farm at R K Nagar, near Agartala in the same state (map). The clade of HPAI H5N1 virus was 2.3.2.



The map shows locations of infected farms and the 3 Km culling zone (red circles). The dark green area is Bangladesh. Map courtesy Dr Leo Loth, Chief Technical Advisor, FAO India.

SAARC Regional Leading Diagnostic Laboratories

Highly pathogenic avian influenza laboratory in Pakistan

The Government of Pakistan has identified the National Reference Laboratory for Poultry Diseases (NRLPD) at National Agricultural Research Centre, Islamabad as the SAARC Regional Leading Diagnostic Laboratory for avian influenza. The laboratory focal person identified is Dr Khalid Naeem, Chief Scientific Officer and Head of NRLPD. The contact details of the laboratory are, Tel: +92-51-9255536, Fax: +92-51-9255420, E-mail: nrlpd@comsats.net.pk

Foot and mouth disease laboratory in India

The Government of India has identified Project Directorate on Foot and Mouth Disease (PD-FMD), Mukteswar, district Nainital-263 138, Uttarakhand state as the SAARC Regional Leading Diagnostic Laboratory for FMD. Dr Bramhadev Pattnaik, Project Director is identified as the laboratory focal person. The contact details of the laboratory are, Tel: +91-5942-286004, Fax: +91-5942-286307, E-mail- pdfmd111@gmail.com

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Consultation on Lab Networking in Kathmandu

The Regional Support Unit, funded by European Union's HPED project for South Asia, based in Sub Regional ECTAD, FAO, Nepal organized a 'Consultation for establishing a network of Regional Leading Diagnostic Laboratories'. SAARC identified priority transboundary animal diseases (TADs), viz. foot and mouth disease (FMD), peste des petits ruminants (PPR) and highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) were addressed in the consultation process. It was emphasised that the leading laboratories for these priority diseases would be based in Bangladesh (PPR), India (FMD) and Pakistan (HPAI). Delegates from six SAARC member states participated in this consultation.

- 3) In preparedness planning, Countries establish mechanisms and procedures to dispatch and receive diagnostic samples and biologicals.

The present, 'Consultation for establishing a network of Regional Leading Diagnostic Laboratories in South Asia' was held from 2 to 4 March 2011 at Kathmandu, Nepal.

The immediate objectives of this consultation were to:

- Share information about the mandate of the leading laboratories;
- Share information about the facilities available in the regional and national laboratories and to discuss how these laboratories could be strengthened to assist in the progressive disease control pathways (PCP) in South Asia; and



Participants from SAARC countries in a group photo of Consultation on Lab networking in Kathmandu, Nepal

During the high level meeting of the SAARC member countries held on 13th - 14th January, 2011 in Bangkok, Thailand a set of recommendations were developed and agreed by the member states. Taking forward some of the specific recommendations that;

- The RSU promotes the establishment of regional and national networks of leading diagnostic laboratories for HPEDs (FMD, PPR, HPAI) and other priority diseases (e.g. Brucellosis) including identifying their functions;
- The leading laboratories having the capability for molecular characterization of the viruses are encouraged to increase capacity in order to assist other countries in the diagnosis and characterization of viruses conforming to protocols developed by expert groups such as, FAO/OIE Working Group on FMD and OIE/FAO Network of Expertise on Animal Influenza (OFFLU), and also promote sharing of virus sequence information through the laboratory networks; and

- Consider ways of strengthening cooperation, through formation of regional laboratory networks (disease surveillance and diagnosis) and harmonization of laboratory protocols to control priority TADs in SAARC member countries.

The participants deliberated on the requirements and modalities of establishing laboratory networking for FMD, HPAI and PPR in the SAARC countries. An inventory of the facilities and infrastructure for three disease specific laboratories was compiled based on the information provided by the participants. Some of the salient recommendations made are as under;

- Conduct regional laboratory assessment for diagnostic capacity and trainings
- Develop strategy to conduct Regional Proficiency Testing
- Support diagnostic capacity in the region



Thematic group work in progress as a part of Consultation for establishing a network of Regional leading diagnostic laboratories in South Asia in Kathmandu, Nepal

- Develop regional and international sample sharing / referral system
- Harmonize SOPs using Pirbright (for FMD)/OIE protocols as the basis
- Leading laboratories to produce reagents to develop regional diagnostic capacity
- Monitor vaccine production and quality of vaccines including vaccine matching
- Create SAARC FMD working group
- Develop SAARC Agreement for sharing of data and biological materials with options like Code of conduct and/or OIE MTA
- Consider a regional platform for information sharing e.g. EMPRES-i Asia
- The Laboratory focal points should develop harmonized specifications for procurement of consumables and reagents needed for the diagnosis of FMD, PPR, and HPAI
- Leading laboratories and other labs with salient resources should be engaged in capacity building in the region
- Technical / lab networks meetings, at least once a year to present and discuss scientific information
- National/Leading Diagnostic laboratories send quarterly report to SAARC Secretariat/Regional Support Unit
- Regular data sharing after CVO's approval
- Submit sequences to Gene Bank regularly
- Sharing of diagnostic specimens and results with International Reference Laboratories
- Develop guidelines for vaccine and vaccination performance monitoring
- Monitoring of vaccine quality in field by conducting studies on vaccine stability and duration of immunity

- Initiation of Public Private Partnership to address the issue of transboundary animal diseases, particularly FMD
- Create public awareness on vaccine preventable diseases

Media sensitization workshop at Agartala (Tripura) India

In 2010 and early 2011, a series of media workshops were organized in India, Nepal and Bangladesh. The latest one in the series was held on 7th March, 2011 at Agartala in Tripura state of India targeting the print and electronic media journalists.

The workshop was very timely as Tripura experienced two major HPAI outbreaks in February and early March 2011 and there was mixed reporting on the issue. Overall 42 journalists representing English and vernacular press (print and electronic) participated in the day long interactive workshop along with 21 officials from Animal Resources Development Department (ARDD), Department of Health & Family Welfare and Department of Information of the state government.

The workshop was opened by Mr. K. V. Satyanarayan, Principal Secretary, ARDD, Government of Tripura. In his inaugural speech, he urged the journalists to do the balanced and judicious reporting on HPAI related matters including reporting on culling etc. He said that poultry is one of the major sources of livelihood for the poor people in the state, and thus, in no way scare and panic should be created by the media, which results in hampering the livelihood of poor families. He also said that the state government was better prepared this time to handle any HPAI outbreak. Dr. S. Roy, Principal, College of Veterinary Sciences, Agartala and former Director ARDD, Dr A Roy Burman were also present during the workshop.

During the technical session, the media personnel were sensitized about the clinical picture of HPAI, situation of HPAI in South Asia, the concept of One Health (OH) as well as advocacy and communication issues for effective reporting of disease outbreaks. The journalists were sensitized on advocacy and communication issues for writing objective and effective stories related with



Members of print and electronic media attending Media Sensitization Workshop in Agartala, India

HPAI in media and also the dissemination of information on a few technical areas of isolation/separation, frequently washing hands with soap and disinfecting surfaces, issues related with hygiene/ sanitation and enhanced biosecurity along with importance of timely reporting of disease to the authorities. The workshop was totally interactive and representatives from media were also invited to present their experiences in reporting the HPAI outbreak in the state. A few of the journalists were very active and interacted a lot on each of the presentation. The ARDD also made a presentation on the activities being undertaken to control and contain the current outbreaks in the state.

FMD- Progressive Control Pathway (PCP) workshops in Bhutan and Sri Lanka



Mr. Tenzin Dhendup, DG, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Royal Government of Bhutan (6th from right in front row) along with participants of FMD-PCP workshop in Thimphu, Bhutan.

On 4th and 18th April, 2011 two separate workshops were organized at Thimphu (Bhutan) and Kandy (Sri Lanka) on foot and mouth disease (FMD) - Progressive Control Pathway (PCP). The workshops were organized under the "Regional Cooperation Programme on Highly Pathogenic and Emerging Diseases (HPED) in South Asia, which is funded by European Union. About 35 personnel working with Department of Livestock of the Royal Government of Bhutan including the Director General participated in the workshop in Thimphu. In the Kandy workshop about 40 officials from the Department of Animal Production and Health (DAPH) and Department of Wildlife Conservation participated.

In Bhutan Dr. Pasang Tshering from National Centre for Animal Health made a presentation on 'Foot & Mouth Disease Surveillance and Control in Bhutan'. While the presentation included the FMD status in the country, it also included the outbreaks, virus types and vaccination status and availability of vaccines and also



Group work in progress at workshop on FMD- Progressive Control Pathway in Thimphu, Bhutan.



Participants of workshop on "FMD- Progressive Control Pathway" alongwith Additional Director General DAPH, Dr. A D N Chandrasiri, (sitting 6th from left) in Kandy, Sri Lanka.

the FMD prevention and control policy of the country.

Dr (Mrs) Ranjani Hettiarachchi, Deputy Director DAPH of Sri Lanka made her presentation on the status of FMD in the country. She also talked about Animal Diseases Act and its implications on FMD control in Sri Lanka. According to her, the country has re-commenced FMD vaccine production which was interrupted in 1994. Since 2009, a scientific approach has been adopted for vaccination by virus characterization and vaccine matching undertaken in collaboration with the World Reference Laboratory, Pirbright, UK.

During both workshops Dr. Mohinder Oberoi, Manager Sub-regional ECTAD and Coordinator - Regional Support Unit (SAARC) explained the key elements of the FMD-PCP, including progression and monitoring the achievements at 0-5 stages of PCP to declare the country free from FMD by the the year 2020. He also explained the key outcomes at the end of every stage in the PCP. The participants at both

workshops were engaged in group work to identify issues associated with animal movement and surveillance, vaccine availability and future needs.



Group work in progress at workshop on FMD- Progressive Control Pathway in Kandy, Sri Lanka.

Consultative workshop - The integration of livestock market chain analysis in the control of HPEDs in South and Southeast Asia, Bangkok

The workshop was held on 26-27 April 2011 in Bangkok with the broad objective to develop a guideline for the implementation of livestock market chain studies to be used in the control of Highly Pathogenic Emerging Diseases (HPED) in South and Southeast Asia and specifically;

- a. To prioritize the required epidemiological (human and animal) and socio-economic data to identify efficient and equitable interventions to reduce disease maintenance and transmission of HPEDs.
- b. To identify the required data collection techniques, data storage and data analysis and modelling techniques.

The workshop was attended by about 20 participants invited from ECTAD-RAP, FAO HQ, RSU-SAARC and RSU-ASEAN along with OIE, and participants from countries like China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, United Kingdom and United States of America.

In context of South Asia, it was proposed that cattle and buffalo population data from India can be used for a bio-economic herd model to estimate the surplus of (male) animals. Road network information could be used to model the spatial flow of this surplus to border points with Bangladesh and India. Data on the location and trade volumes of markets and cross-border trade corridors would be collected by a value chain study on cattle and buffalo trade between Bangladesh, India and Nepal. This data will be used to validate the data from the herd model. Parameters for the herd model such as off-take rates, calving intervals, seasonality, mortality, draft power use etc. will need to be collected via a questionnaire or survey in several districts within India.



Deliberation on integration of livestock market chain analysis in the control of HPEDs in Bangkok, Thailand.

Upcoming Events

- Foot and Mouth Disease Laboratory Training at SAARC Regional Leading Diagnostic Laboratory on FMD, India, 2-7 May 2011
- ECTAD Team Leaders Planning Meeting to discuss process towards institutionalization of One Health approach, 9-11 May, FAO HQ Rome
- HPED Mid-term Evaluation, May 2011
- FAO Regional Workshop: The World after Rinderpest, 7-8 June 2011, Bangkok, Thailand
- FAO Regional Workshop: Maintaining Vigilance for Diseases caused by Morbilliviruses, 9-10 June 2011, Bangkok, Thailand
- EU-HPED and GF-TADs meetings, July 2011
- Workshop on epidemiology and laboratory networking, August 2011



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