



EMERGENCY CENTRE FOR TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES • FAO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

## Veterinary victory

*They came; they saw; they concurred.*

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The setting was a conference hall in a hotel in Phuket, Thailand, for three days from August 29 to 31, 2010. The occasion? The first ever meeting of Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) and high-level technical officers within animal health agencies in the Asia-Pacific region with the Chief Veterinary Officer of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and regional FAO staff.

The meeting was attended by 22 participants, eight of them CVOs, from 11 countries of South and Southeast Asia, in addition to representatives of FAO Rome, the Organization for Animal Health (OIE), and representatives of the private sector.

The meeting aimed to focus greater attention on developing and sustaining veterinary epidemiology as a core institutional strength at both the national and regional levels. Early detection and rapid response to animal diseases depends upon building the capacity for veterinary epidemiology in the region of Asia and the Pacific.

Dr. Juan Lubroth, FAO CVO, Rome, gave a presentation entitled *Challenges, Opportunities and Needs for Veterinary Epidemiology* which provided global and well as regional illustrations impressing the benefits of epidemiology capacity building and the need to provide institutional support for it.



**Dr. Juan Lubroth, FAO CVO, Rome, welcomes participants to the meeting, while Dr Wantanee Kalpravidh, Regional Project Coordinator, RAP, watches.**

Dr John, Stratton, OIE representative from the Asia sub-regional office, explained the Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) tool and the

### *The View from the Farm (see page 4)*

**A unique workshop at the India-Bangladesh border works with a diverse group of backyard farmers, commercial farmers, transporters, wet market operators and others to develop new processes and tools for understanding disease transmission and infection. Read the full story on the back page.**

PHOTO: C Y Gopinath





The collated results of the self-assessment exercise to assess each country's capacity and needs related to veterinary epidemiology are posted on the wall for participants to browse through.

Programme to Strengthen Veterinary Services (PSVS) in Southeast Asia, and how they both support epidemiology capacity development at the country level. He also stressed that in-country development and implementation of veterinary epidemiology is within the mandate of FAO and that further collaboration with OIE is needed to realize improved capacity in this area.

A defining activity of the meeting was a self-assessment of each country's capacity and needs related to veterinary epidemiology, using questions derived from the OIE PVS evaluation tool. After a presentation



of the collated findings, countries shared their experiences and plans for institutional development for epidemiology capacity building.

A private industry representative announced their intention to hire an epidemiologist and also to advocate for private veterinarians to receive funding and access to epidemiology training, adding also that government guidance would be needed.

The meeting ended with agreement to support the development of capacity in veterinary epidemiology within the veterinary services in the region's countries to the fullest extent possible, and to utilize epidemiology to support a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral and multi-hazard approach to emergency management.

FAO and OIE agreed to support member countries in developing national and regional strategies for developing capacity in veterinary epidemiology, particularly human resources, through systematic training according to identified national needs.



In his presentation, Dr. Juan Lubroth, FAO CVO, Rome, (left) provided global as well as regional illustrations impressing the benefits of epidemiology capacity building and the need to provide institutional support for it.

(Above left) Participating CVOs develop plans for supporting capacity building in veterinary epidemiology in their countries.

## REGIONAL NEWS

### Field Study Demonstration of an Animal Health Outbreak Investigation workshop

Ayutthaya, Thailand • 19-23 July 2010

Something abnormal was going on in Pakhai district, Ayutthaya province, Thailand — Open Bill Storks were dying off in unusually large numbers, according to farmers. Although the event had taken place in a previous year, simulating it again provided an outstanding opportunity for a field-level animal health outbreak investigation to students of the two-year regional Field Epidemiology Training Programme for Veterinarians (FETPV).

Trainees interviewed 25 rice farmers who had been recruited and briefed for an interview session to verify the existence outbreak according to the steps of outbreak investigation. The Reporting Officers provided technical guidance to the trainees during the exercise, including briefing them on the outbreak history, data collection and consultations with provincial and district veterinarians.

Facilitation was through group discussions, presentations, and mentoring. Preliminary outcomes from the exercise were also presented to field veterinary officers to promote the FETPV concept of 'training through providing services'. The success of the exercise owed a great deal to the ready cooperation of the Ayutthaya Provincial Livestock Office, Department of Livestock Development.

### Wrap-up Meeting for the Regional Assessment of HPAI in Cross-border Areas of South and Southeast Asia: A Socio-economic perspective

Luang Prabang, Lao PDR • 18-20 August

A regional meeting was convened 18-20 August in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, under the scope of the project *Strengthening regional capacity to control and prevent avian influenza in Asia and the Pacific*. The meeting was attended by 44 participants from the partner organizations that implemented the field studies, local representative from the countries included in the selected cross-border areas, expert from FAO HQ, Chief Technical Advisors or

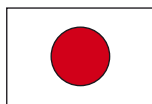
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# Lessons from the field

Proven and promising practices in the fight against H5N1 HPAI are shared by key partners

## FETPV for Lao animal health staff

In a meeting on 16 July at Khon Kaen University, agreement was reached between FAO ECTAD-RAP, FAO Lao and Khon Kaen university to conduct the second annual FETPV Short Course for Lao veterinarians and para-veterinarians entitled *Veterinary Epidemiology in Action*, from 4 to 22 October 2010 at Khon Kaen University.

FAO country team leaders of the countries where field studies have been conducted, FAO Lao PDR and FAO ECTAD-RAP staff.

The meeting aimed to present the findings of the six field studies implemented for this component of the project, to conduct the risk assessment of the spread of HPAI H5N1 in selected cross-border areas and to design tailor-made risk mitigation strategies.

The risk assessment was conducted in 11 cross-border areas: 5 in Southeast Asia (SEA) and 6 in South Asia (SA). Some of the agreed risk mitigation strategies include interventions in awareness, institution building, markets and marketing, trade, border points and surveillance. There was agreement to encourage the integration of cross-border aspects into the national disease control programs, including targeted surveillance, biosecurity and restructuring of the poultry sector where relevant.

## 2nd Regional Consultation to develop a Regional Strategy Framework for Communication

*Bangkok, Thailand • 29-30 July, 2010*

As the next step in a consultative process begun in end-June to develop a regional strategy framework for communication, a meeting of regional stakeholders from South and South-east Asia was conducted on 29-30 July at the Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel, Bangkok. It was attended by over 28 participants, including senior animal health officers



(Above) FETPV students from China, Myanmar and Thailand watch as Acty George, a wild life specialist, inspects the shells of apple snails (*Pila globosa*), which constitutes the diet of the Open Bill Storks that had been dying off in unusual number in Thailand's Ayutthaya province. (Right) An FETPV participant interviews a community farmer.



from seven countries (Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam), senior representatives from the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), the UN System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC), and FAO, as well as representatives from international NGOs such as CARE and the Academy for Education and Development (AED). The meeting was truly multidisciplinary and multisectoral, throwing together veterinarians, epidemiologists and livestock officers with communication specialists.

In the meeting which lasted two days, participants reviewed some of the key issues identified in the previous meeting in June, where FAO's Chief Technical Officers and communication specialists had pooled their experiences to pinpoint some of the

broad successes, lessons and future challenges around the move to expand the focus to EIDs and embrace the principles of *One Health*.

The meeting ended with the formation of a multi-agency, multi-sectoral working group to review the draft regional strategy framework for communication. There was agreement that FAO, with its rich experience in fostering regional collaboration and consensus, would be well positioned to lead the process and develop the first draft of the document.



World Bank



The Netherlands



China



European Commission



New Zealand



Ireland



France

# The view from the farm

*An innovative workshop at the Bangladesh-India border explores new ways to understand and talk with farmers*

There were over 25 of them, both men and women, in a small room in the Department of Livestock Services office in Jeypurhat, a village in Bangladesh not far from the border with India. Most of them were backyard and commercial farmers from the vicinity. Some had lost their flocks to culling; others had been robbed of their livelihoods when infections had taken away their small flocks.

For two days in early August, just before Ramadan started, they participated in an unusual exploratory community consultation whose main objective was to find new and culturally acceptable ways of explaining technical information to non-technical audiences. The consultation was supported by funds from the Asian Development Bank's project titled *Strengthening regional capacity to control and prevent avian influenza in Asia and the Pacific*, which ended on August 31. The meeting was facilitated by C Y Gopinath, Regional Communication Coordinator based in Bangkok, and Dr Mahbubul Hoque, National Consultant, Disease Control and Training, FAO Bangladesh. Attending as observers from Bangkok were Dr David Castellan, epidemiologist, and Dr Elizabeth Miranda, epidemiologist. Other observers in the team were Dr Priya Mohan Das, National Consultant, HPAI Surveillance, and Mr Jagmeet Uppal, Advocacy Officer, ECTAD Subregional Office, Kathmandu.

Participants, accustomed to direct disseminations in which technical experts explain issues and risks to them, were surprised by a workshop where they did most of the telling. Using role play, simulations, drawing, quizzes, and a variety of other participatory processes, they identified their doubts and certainties, questions and learnings. Some of the findings —

Most of them perceived gumboro to be a much more significant threat than HPAI.

There was dissonance between what they had been told and their experienced realities. "We are told not to eat infected chicken, but we cook it well and none of us has ever fallen ill." Another perception gap was in the information that HPAI could become a serious threat to human health. "If it's true, why do we not see it around us?" asked a farmer.

## Profound gap

Underlying these doubts was a profound gap in the way disease was perceived by epidemiologists and doctors on the one hand, and by community members on the other. The most telling difference was in the understanding of causes of disease. While biomedical professionals and epidemiologists explained disease by referring to pathogens such as viruses, community members simply had no framework for comprehending invisible living creatures that could harm them and their livestock.

Much of the second day of the meeting was dedicated to developing the outline of a dialogue process in Bengali, using images and analogies drawn from Bangladesh cultural life and experience, to create a conceptual framework for understanding microorganisms that

help us or harm us in our daily lives.

"No one has explained this to us like this before," said one farmer, eyes shining. "We now begin to understand what we are fighting."

Dr Castellan, who sat through the entire meeting as observer, noted, "This activity has been missing. We need to engage with communities like this, not talking at them but in dialogue with them to understand how they see it all."

*(Below) Participants draw maps of their working environments and identify risk hot-spots and activities. (Bottom) In one simulation called Figureheads, participants role-played community leaders advising a farmer on her predicament of whether to report illness and lose the flock to culling, or keep quiet and risk a mass outbreak.*

