

Avian Influenza (AI) Outbreak in Korea

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The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) announced that a parent stock duck farm with suspected Avian influenza (AI) symptoms was reported in Gochang, North Jeolla Province, on January 16, and is currently being scrutinized by the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency. Avian influenza (AI) is a viral contagious animal disease that infects birds such as chickens and ducks. When the avian influenza is a highly pathogenic strain of avian influenza (HPAI), it is classified as a type 1 infectious disease in domestic animals as it has high mortality rate.

Recently the farm observed some suspected AI symptoms such as increasing natural mortality and drastically decreasing egg production and reported it to the authorities on January 16. According to the result of initial testing by the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency, it was confirmed as H5N1 AI and whether it is HPAI or not is expected to be determined by the afternoon of January 17. The result of research on the vehicle registration database shows that within the AI latent period (max. 21 days), 173,000 ducklings were sold to 24 farms in four provinces, and particularly in the process of selling to 21 farms in North Chungcheong Province, the transportation vehicles accessed a slaughterhouse in Jincheon after transporting those ducklings.

MAFRA says that as the route of ducklings from the reported farm has been identified, it is necessary to conduct strict control of the 25 farms and one slaughterhouse. Accordingly, MAFRA has cooperated with the Ministry of Security and Public Administration, municipalities, the Ministry of National Defense and National Police Agency with the division of roles in responding to the crisis in accordance with the AI Standards of Procedure (SOP) and proactively takes action such as precautionary stamping-out in preparation for unexpected situations. MAFRA is in the process of stamping out poultry at the Gochang farm (12,000 out of 21,000 completed). It also sent the initial response team to the 25 farms including 24 farms that bought the ducklings, and completed the access control and disinfection processes. The team consists of staff from municipalities, the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency and the Livestock Health Control Association.

MAFRA also shut down the epidemiologically related slaughterhouse and is tracing vehicles that accessed it, and plans to execute precautionary stamping-out at the farms that bought the ducklings if any suspected symptoms are found from the investigation. It is also tracing vehicles that accessed those farms that bought the ducklings as it is doing for the vehicles that accessed the slaughterhouse. To build a systematic response system, MAFRA also issued an emergency standby order to its staff, municipalities and disease control agencies, reinforced the operation of the control center, sent the disease control task force to the reported regions, set the disease control zone and installed control posts. MAFRA has also built a cooperative system with relevant authorities, including manpower mobilization (Ministry of National Defense and National Policy Agency) and the supply of anti-virus drugs (Ministry of Health and Welfare). MAFRA has said it will keep the people updated on

the current state, including two press briefings every day to ease the worries of the farms and people. MAFRA has said it will continue to carry out thorough disease control activities according to the AI SOP and is currently responding at the level equivalent for the situation of confirmed HPAI although it has not yet been confirmed.

MAFRA has requested that the poultry farms across the nation carry out disease control and disinfection activities thoroughly and report to MAFRA, the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency or the animal disease control part of the relevant municipality (1588-4060, 1588-9060) if they find any suspected AI symptoms (such as drastic decrease in feed consumption and egg production, cyanosis, and rapidly increasing mortality rate (see Q3 in the attachment)). MAFRA has also requested the citizens to refrain from visiting poultry farms in the areas with an outbreak of AI, take extra care that shoes do not hold feces of migratory birds when visiting migratory bird habitats, and refrain from visiting poultry farms when they visit foreign countries with an outbreak of AI. It has also emphasized that the poultry from the farms with an outbreak of HPAI will never be circulated in the market as they are all stamped out or disposed of under strict access control. MAFRA requested the citizens not to have unnecessary worries about the consumption of poultry; even if AI-infected poultry is circulated in the market by any chance, it is absolutely safe if they boil the poultry product at 70°C water for 30 minutes or in 75°C water for 5 minutes in order to kill all the AI viruses. WHO and FAO have also concluded that there is no risk of being infected with AI by eating boiled chicken, ducks or eggs.

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