

Status of Avian Influenza in India

Avian influenza (AI) virus has been circulating worldwide for centuries with four known outbreaks recorded in the last century. The present wave of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) emerged in Hong Kong in 1997. In view of a threat of global outbreak of AI and apprehensions of a human pandemic, the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries (DADF), Government of India had prepared an action plan in 2005 itself (well before the first outbreak in the country), to deal with eventuality, if any.

India remained free from Avian Influenza till mid-February 2006.

Past Outbreaks of Avian Influenza in India

1. India experienced the first Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Outbreak (H5N1) outbreak in the State of Maharashtra, Gujarat which was notified on 18th February, 2005 followed by second outbreak in Madhya Pradesh during March to April, 2006.

A total of 10.44 lakh birds were culled during control and containment operations undertaken. After successful completion of operations, country regained freedom from the disease in August 2006.

2. The third outbreak of Avian Influenza occurred during July 2007 in a small poultry farm at Chingmeirong in East Imphal district of Manipur. The outbreak was controlled immediately without any further spread to the neighboring areas. A total of 3.39 lakh birds were culled. India achieved freedom from the disease on 7th November, 2007.

3. The fourth outbreak of Avian Influenza in the country was confirmed in Birbhum and Dakshin Dinajpur districts of West Bengal on 15.01.2008. Subsequently, the disease spread to 13 more districts of the State, viz., Murshidabad, Burdwan, South-24 Parganas, Nadia, Hooghly, Howrah, Coochbehar, Malda, Paschim Medinipur, Bankura, Purulia, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. The outbreak covered 55 blocks and 2 municipalities in 15 districts of West Bengal. A total of about 42.62 lakh birds had to be culled in the control and containment operations undertaken in the State.

4. Fifth outbreak of Avian Influenza was also reported in Salema Block of Dhalai district of Tripura on 7th April 2008. Subsequently, the disease spread to two more blocks viz. Mohanpur and Bishalgarh in West Tripura district. A total of 19 lakh birds had to be culled. After successful control and containment operations, India declared itself free from the disease on 4th November, 2008.

