PROTOCOL FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA A (H7N9) RISK-BASED SURVEILLANCE

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Adopted: 24 November 2014
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WHEREAS, on 31 March 2013, the authorities of the People's Republic of China reported three human cases of infection with a novel avian influenza A strain of subtype H7N9 in Shanghai, Eastern China and as of July 2014, 450 human cases have been reported with a case fatality rate of 36%;

WHEREAS, the Chinese authorities detected avian influenza A(H7N9) virus in surveillance samples taken from chickens, ducks and pigeons, mostly at live poultry markets (LPMs) and from poultry vendors linked to human cases;

WHEREAS, the recent avian influenza A (H7N9) event in China is a cause of great concern in the region considering almost borderless trade among countries, and the significant progress in transportation, where more people and products can travel between countries faster than incubation period of aforementioned disease.

WHEREAS, H7N9 virus is unique in that it does not cause any disease or apparent production loss in poultry population but has high infectivity for humans. Thus, this low pathogenic influenza H7N9 has a significant potential to silently spread widely in poultry populations without being detected.

WHEREAS, a risk based surveillance in live poultry markets (LPMs) to determine whether the A (H7N9) virus has already been circulating within domestic or wild bird populations as well as to enhance early detection of the virus' incursion into the domestic bird population would allow for a quick response;

NOW THEREFORE, I, PROCESO J. ALCALA, Secretary of Agriculture, by the powers vested in me by law do hereby issue the following protocol on risk-based surveillance for H7N9 for observance and guidance of all concerned:

1. Initial surveillance shall be conducted in livestock poultry markets. Ideally it is necessary to understand the poultry trading networks especially those that involve LPMs and to identify LPMs with a central role in these networks.

2. Selecting LPMs for sampling shall depend on the following criteria:

- Provinces with high poultry population density

- Within the selected provinces, market selection may be based on the following criteria:

    - Markets with the most poultry sellers or poultry sold.
    - Markets with low market biosecurity practices: low biosecurity and poor implementation of disinfection and hygienic measures, unsold birds reoffered for sale the following day, no segregation of bird species, etc.
    - Markets with slaughter facilities supplied with birds coming from various origins.

3. Based from the Philippine National Atlas of Farm Animal Resources (EAHMI Publication), the following provinces have a high poultry population density:

- Pampanga
- Bulacan
- Nueva Ecija
- Cavite
- Batangas
- Manila (market point)
- Laguna
- Bukidnon
- Misamis Oriental

Provinces (areas within provinces) with the second highest poultry population density are the following:

- Cebu
- Zamboanga City
- IIoilo
- Pangasinan
- Tarlac
- Camarines Sur

4. Select a maximum of ten markets per province given the criteria for selection. Note that the objective is to detect the presence of the virus at the national/area level rather than the provincial level hence a maximum of 10 (so could be less than 10) markets shall be enough.

5. Samples types:

a. Environmental samples shall be collected from the following sample locations: tables where birds are displayed; moist areas of baskets holding bird parts; waste bins containing wet poultry waste; processing tables; wet cloths/rags; birds' drinking water. Pooling of samples in batches of five is acceptable as long as samples from different locations and environments (drinking water and table tops, for instance) are not pooled together.

b. Live birds: a focus on oropharyngeal swabs from chickens, quail and geese is recommended. The birds' samples shall be representative of the overall live bird population in the market.

Maximum of 60 samples per market shall do (at 95% confidence level and assuming number of birds in the market at a given time is unknown).

c. Pooling of samples in batches of five is acceptable, as long as environmental and oropharyngeal samples from different species are kept separate.

d. Sampling is to be done once a year preferably during the months of the flu season (September - March).

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6. The samples shall be tested at the Philippine Animal Health Center (PAHC) or in the nearest Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (RADDL) with RT-PCR capability.

7. All test results shall be forwarded to the Animal Health Division (AHD) and Philippine Animal Health Information System (PhilAHIS) for analysis and evaluation.

8. A market is considered positive if at least one sample or pool of samples - environmental or oropharyngeal is found positive according to the virological diagnostic test. A market is also considered positive if at least one positive H7 hemagglutinin inhibition (HI) case is found and confirmed by a neuraminidase (NA) - N9 positive test.

9. If a positive is confirmed, the AIPP provisions on response to H7N9 shall be activated.

If any provision of this Order is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining portions thereof which are not affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

All existing administrative orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Order are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

This Order shall take effect immediately.

Approved this ___ day of November 2014 in Quezon City, Philippines.

Recommending Approval:

(SGD) RUBINA O. CRESENCIO, DVM
Acting Director IV

Approved:

(SGD) PROCESO J. ALCALA
Secretary

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