IN BELGIUM

**Increased vigilance for avian influenza**

Following the detection of avian influenza outbreaks in chicken farms in the Netherlands (see “In Europe”), a number of measures have been taken by the Belgian Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (AFSCA/FAVV).

Belgian avian farms that have imported chicken or eggs from the Netherlands have been put under strict surveillance. Markets, exhibitions, and all other events where live poultry is brought together have been banned for an undetermined length of time. Other hygiene measures have been recommended to chicken farms to prevent the introduction of avian influenza. Persons or trucks involved in the transport of chicken or chicken feed, that have been in physical contact with Dutch avian farms, are forbidden from entering Belgian farms for a duration of 4 days.

Avian influenza generally infects only birds but there have been isolated cases of humans contracting the disease. The most recent cases were reported in Hong Kong last week in a boy and his father who have been infected with influenza virus A H5N1 (see previous issue). However, the genes of the H7N7 virus identified in the Netherlands provide reassurance that this virus has not acquired genes that would enable it to cause significant disease in humans, nor allow it to spread from person to person. Sources: AFSCA/FAVV, press release from March 3, [http://www.afsca.be/](http://www.afsca.be/) and Promed [http://www.promedmail.org](http://www.promedmail.org)

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IN EUROPE

**Avian influenza in the Netherlands**

An outbreak of avian influenza has been reported in the Netherlands on March 1 and the diagnosis of highly pathogenic avian influenza has been confirmed with the PCR test on March 2 at the Reference Laboratory of the Central Institute for Animal Disease Control, Lelystad, the Netherlands. On the same day, there were already 16 poultry farms suspected of avian influenza. The Dutch government banned all exports of poultry and related farm products. The Agriculture Ministry ordered farmers to keep chickens and other birds inside and prohibited the transport or sale of eggs, poultry or animal feed. To prevent infections from spreading in the Netherlands, roads were closed for a radius of 6 miles around all suspect farms. The virus is the H7N7 strain of avian influenza. Meanwhile some countries such as Israel and Japan have already banned Dutch poultry product from the Netherlands. Source: Promed [http://www.promedmail.org](http://www.promedmail.org)
Fatal case of measles in Spain

An outbreak of measles in Almeria (southeastern Spain) has resulted in the death of a 33-year-old woman as a consequence of complications of viral pneumonitis. According to Health officials there have been 77 cases of measles, including 18 confirmed cases, reported during the last 3 weeks of February. All persons from 20 to 35 years, who have not had the disease or been vaccinated, have been called to health centers to be immunized.

In Spain, vaccine coverage was 97 percent in 1990 and 94 percent in 2000. The last major epidemic was recorded in 1986. 136 cases were reported in 2001, of which 36 were confirmed. Source: Promed http://www.promedmail.org