IN BELGIUM

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Belgium: update

A suspect case has been reported in Brussels in a person coming back from China, and testing is under way to identify another possible aetiology. This case has completely recovered.

Belgium has lifted his travel advice to Singapore. Travellers are currently advised to postpone essential travels to China (including Hong Kong SAR and Taiwan). Sources: IPH and Federal Public Service of Public Health (http://www.health.fgov.be/)

Avian influenza: update

The last outbreak of avian influenza among poultry in Belgium has been reported on April 28. No new outbreak has been detected in poultry farms since that date. An outbreak reported in Germany has prompted control measures in Belgium and a ministerial decree has been issued on May 12 to limit transport of persons, vehicles, animal and goods that have been in contact with German farms. The AFSCA/FAAV (Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain) announced on May 11 that Belgian authorities preventively killed tens of thousands of poultry after authorities identified 10 farms considered at risk of the infection spreading from Germany. No new human case of avian influenza A H7N7 has been detected in Belgium, in spite of the surveillance system that has been put into place. Sources: IPH, AFSCA/FAAV and Federal Public Service of Public Health (http://www.health.fgov.be/).

ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE

Avian influenza in Germany

On 8 May 2003, a suspected presence of avian influenza was officially recorded in a stock of 30,000 broilers in North Rhine-Westphalia. The reason for introduction is not known. Some animals showed clinical signs. A first PCR test was positive and the highly pathogenic avian influenza was confirmed on May 13. Source: Promed (http://www.promedmail.org)
Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) worldwide: update

Up to May 14, WHO reported a cumulative total of 7628 probable cases and 587 deaths, affecting 29 countries. 93% of all cases were reported in China (Hong Kong SAR and Taiwan included). Toronto (Canada) has been taken out of the list of affected countries.

In Hong Kong, 22% of all cases involved health care workers or medical students.

The Council of Health Ministers met in an extraordinary meeting dedicated to SARS on May 6 adopted conclusions on SARS identifying the way forward. They consider that there is no need for asymptomatic travelers in Europe who have come from an affected area to restrict their activity unless they have known contact with a probable case and general registration or health screenings at ports of arrival in Europe are of little value. Sources: Promed (http://www.promedmail.org) and WHO (http://www.who.int)

Cholera in Iraq

The national public health laboratory in Kuwait has confirmed the presence of *Vibrio cholerae* in 4 out of the 38 samples that the WHO team in Basra collected last week. Another 18 cases have been clinically and laboratory confirmed from three hospitals in Basra. Due to the current security situation and difficulties experienced in restoring safe water supplies to the population, a larger cholera epidemic is predicted. WHO is extremely concerned about the current high levels of diarrhoeal disease which are being reported from across Iraq. WHO believes that the lack of access to clean, safe water and the problems with security combine to produce a particularly dangerous situation in which there could be a large number of cases of diarrhoeal disease - including, but not limited to, cholera. Source: WHO http://www.who.int/csr/don/2003_05_14/en/