

WOAH Regional Workshop on Avian Disease Prevention and Control in Asia and the Pacific

Hokkaido University, Sapporo, Japan

26 – 28 August 2025

Rationale

The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) has been steadfast in supporting Members of the Asia Pacific Region in response to the avian influenza threat through the conduct of relevant meetings and fora focused on the One Health approach, improvement of diagnostic capacity, implementation of prevention and control measures such as biosecurity, stamping out and/or use of vaccines, strengthening surveillance, and enhancement of disease reporting.

Among these regular activities is the WOA Regional Workshop for Avian Disease Prevention and Control in Asia and the Pacific which, this year, is held in collaboration with the WOA Reference Laboratory for Avian Influenza at Hokkaido University, featuring dedicated sessions for the avian disease expert network.

The meeting provided an opportunity for Regional WOA Reference Laboratories on avian influenza, infectious bursal disease (IBD) and Newcastle disease (ND), and WOA Members to meet in person and share data and research on avian influenza, Newcastle disease, other viral and bacterial pathogens, including co-infections and zoonotic influenzas, were also discussed.

The meeting notes:

- The impact of avian diseases on animal and public health, disruption of international trade, and strain on national economies and food resources, underscoring the need for enhanced regional collaboration under a One Health approach.
- Avian influenza remains a major transboundary threat, causing significant losses in poultry, wild birds, dairy cattle, and mammals, while also posing serious zoonotic risks.
- The importance of the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (2024–2033) as a framework for regional and national actions which outlines a coordinated global and regional approach to mitigate the risks of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) through strengthened surveillance, early detection, improved biosecurity, and One Health collaboration.
- The changing ecology and epidemiology of the status of avian diseases which necessitates the periodic revision of control strategies to adapt to the disease situation and the corresponding economic and social concerns.
- The Asia Pacific region has an expert group network on Avian diseases that is comprised of all the WOA Reference Laboratory experts for avian diseases in Asia-Pacific, sub-regional leading laboratories and key regional partners which was formed under the FAO/WOA regional GF-TADs umbrella.
- Ongoing initiatives of Members in the Asia Pacific region on prevention and control of avian diseases, albeit at different levels of implementation and varied priority components.
- Considerable progress in sharing of disease outbreak information, diagnostic advancements and disease prevention and control strategies through the regional avian disease expert network in Asia and the Pacific.
- The need to prioritise other avian diseases in addition to avian influenza and Newcastle disease, through development of prevention and control strategies, and addressing knowledge gaps.

The meeting recommends:

- Conduct of follow-up meetings at the sub-regional level for the further development of roadmaps to include strategies and prioritised activities aligned with the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (2024–2033)
- To optimise the existence and prioritize strengthening of the regional avian disease expert network in the region as well as sub-regional avian disease networks to promote collaborative research, expert consultation, sharing of information and best practices, and capacity building.
- To continue efforts and build on progress in sharing of information on disease outbreak information, diagnostic advancements and disease control and prevention strategies adopting a One Health approach
- To explore joint conduct of activities in the thematic areas of surveillance, enhancement of laboratory capacity and diagnostics, resources and capacity building, vaccination, coordination and policy development, multisectoral coordination, and communication and awareness.
- To create a list of proposed action plans for regional and sub-regional prioritized activities (Please see below detailed outline of gaps and priority action points for each sub-region)

The meeting thanks the Government of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness for their financial contributions, and Hokkaido University for hosting this meeting.

Sub-Regional Breakout Sessions on Strengthening Capacities for Avian Disease Prevention and Control

Proposed Action Plan for the Region and for each Sub-Region, in reference to the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of HPAI (2024-2033)

Objective 1: Prevent HPAI epizootics, panzootics and negative impacts on human health and ecosystems through multisectoral early detection and control

Output 1.1: Avian influenza risk monitoring and risk-based surveillance in domestic and wild animals supported and information shared across sectors at the national, regional and global levels	
Asia-Pacific Region	Improve avian influenza risk-based surveillance systems for domestic and wild animals and include testing of diagnostic samples for avian influenza virus or antibodies in avian and mammalian species where relevant
East Asia	- Train personnel for sample collection - Share, update, and analyse sequence data (bioinformatics)
South Asia	Establish mechanisms for information sharing (e.g., SAARC EpiNet, SAARC Lab Directors' Forum)
South-East Asia	- Utilize regional platforms (e.g., AIGA, ASEAN Laboratory Directors Forum) for data sharing - Jointly develop SOPs for wildlife sampling
Pacific	Standardise disease notification structures
Output 1.2: Laboratory diagnostic capacities for early detection, differentiation and identification of avian influenza viruses established and supported	
Asia-Pacific Region	- Identify and address regional and national gaps in diagnostic capacity, including in molecular diagnosis and analysis, and in knowledge on genetic variations and evolution of avian influenza viruses and cross-species transmission and reservoirs - Promote information and virus data sharing at the national level among key One Health stakeholders and through international scientific coordination and cooperation among WOAHP and FAO Reference Laboratories, research institutions, and academic partners, led by OFFLU
East Asia	Encourage participation in regional proficiency testing (PT)
South Asia	- Expand and strengthen lab capacity - Promote accreditation and biosafety training
South-East Asia	- Increase inter-lab collaboration - Ensure centralized reporting of lab results

Pacific	• Focus training in remote areas and create pathways for sample transport and laboratory access • Establish sentinel reporting networks
Output 1.3: One Health collaborative preparedness and response capacities to control HPAI outbreaks promoted	
Asia-Pacific Region	• Facilitate multidisciplinary, multisectoral and multistakeholder One Health collaborations for preventing and responding to HPAI events at the national, regional, and global level and ensuring a common understanding of roles, responsibilities, applicable legal frameworks, and governance during a response • Support the development of documented intersectoral disease control and operational plans and exercises as key components of national emergency management plans
East Asia	• Organize joint simulation exercises • Implement joint human sero-surveillance
South Asia	• Establish Regional One Health Coordination Committee • Conduct joint risk assessments and implement joint surveillance, especially in border areas • Develop joint outbreak response plans and conduct joint simulation exercises and mock drills
South-East Asia	• Strengthen ASEAN One Health Network through simulation exercises; Develop joint SOPs for simulation; Initiate simulations via One Health Committee • Conduct joint surveillance by livestock and wildlife agencies
Pacific	• Include environmental and wildlife surveillance • Engage NGOs, research institutions, and conservation groups (e.g., WWF, BirdLife) • Use existing infrastructure (e.g., private labs) with government support and policy development • Increase community engagement and risk communication via extension workers

Objective 2: Protect poultry value chains, livelihoods, trade and the health of humans, animals, and ecosystems from HPAI impacts

Output 2.1: Biosecurity and other approaches to reduce HPAI risks along the poultry value chain and at the domestic animal–wildlife–human interface developed and promoted	
Asia-Pacific Region	• Support countries in taking a One Health approach in identifying and assessing biosecurity risks for HPAI introductions onto farms and along poultry value chains and develop progressive biosecurity mitigation options using existing tools (see Annex 2). • Promote collaboration with wildlife authorities to identify high risk wild, avian and mammalian species, habitats and breeding sites where heightened biosecurity or other protections may be needed to prevent exposure, infection and mass mortality of wildlife and protect people and susceptible domestic animals
East Asia	• Monitor and control commercial farms and slaughterhouses • Extend surveillance to small farms, backyard chickens, wild birds, and live bird markets
South Asia	• Raise awareness among butchers, meat handlers, and consumers • Engage Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) to promote biosecurity at the backyard level
South-East Asia	• Review and implement WOAHA guidelines on wildlife disease risks • Conduct community-level education and advocacy across animal–wildlife–human sectors
Pacific	• Promote community engagement and awareness • Prepare for vaccination (e.g., identify suitable vaccines and assess trade impacts)
Output 2.2: HPAI vaccination stewardship guidance aligned to international standards developed and widely communicated	
Asia-Pacific Region	• Support OFFLU (e.g., through the provision of data and viruses) to provide expert technical advice on the characteristics of circulating strains, vaccine matching and quality, and post-vaccination surveillance • Support countries that use vaccines in the application of proper vaccination programmes, assessment of post-vaccination surveillance for virus circulation and monitoring for protection through training and regular updates
East Asia	• Develop HPAI vaccination guidance considering country context and epidemiological situation

	• Develop post-vaccination monitoring guidelines
South Asia	• Develop post-vaccination surveillance protocols • Match vaccines with regional field strains
South-East Asia	• Government to evaluate vaccine efficacy and share results via Reference Laboratories/OFFLU/WOAH • Conduct post-vaccine monitoring at country level
Pacific	• Conduct extension activities and simulation training • Develop easy platforms for reporting
Output 2.3: Guidance, training and advocacy tools are developed, shared and implemented to promote the development of infection-free value chains and safe trade	
Asia-Pacific Region	• Provide guidance and training to countries on the application of a containment zone during HPAI outbreaks in an HPAI-free country or zone in accordance with the WOAHA TAHC, and the steps needed, including surveillance data and movement control, to self-declare HPAI freedom • Conduct economic assessments to demonstrate the financial benefit of additional protection measures to help producers and traders determine the best approach for their system
East Asia	• Review existing guidelines and tools and revise or develop new guidelines based on practical needs
South Asia	• Develop uniform guidelines for zoning and compartmentalization • Share success stories and cost-benefit analyses • Develop model slaughterhouse and transport welfare guidelines
South-East Asia	• Develop localised materials based on WOAHA recommendations • Conduct community-level education and advocacy • Include timely disease reporting in certification criteria
Pacific	• Establish poultry movement tracing systems between islands