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Kerala on alert after bird flu in two districts

Influenza Type A Viruses

Subtypes • Hemagglutinin (HA)
• Neuraminidase (NA)
(Viruses are divided into subtypes on the basis of two proteins on the surface of the virus)



Different combinations of HA and NA proteins are possible

- An H7N2 virus designates an influenza A virus subtype that has an HA7 protein and an NA2 protein
- H5N1 virus has an HA5 protein and an NA1 protein

- 18 known HA subtypes
- 11 known NA subtypes

All known subtypes of influenza A viruses can infect birds, except subtypes H17N10 and H18N11, which have only been found in bats

Influenza A H5

- There are nine known subtypes of H5 viruses
- H5N1, H5N2, H5N3, H5N4, H5N5, H5N6, H5N7, H5N8, H5N9

H5N8 subtype of Influenza A virus reported in ducks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala was placed on high alert on Monday after an outbreak of bird flu was confirmed in Kottayam and Alappuzha districts.

The Animal Husbandry Department has taken adequate steps to contain the spread of infection, Animal Husbandry Minister K. Raju said.

The presence of the H5N8 subtype of the Influenza A virus was reported in ducks in Thalavadi, Thakazhy, Palli-

pad and Karuvatta in Alappuzha district and Neendoor in Kottayam district.

Five of eight samples airlifted to the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases, Bhopal, tested positive for the virus, the Minister said, adding that the infection had not been reported in human beings so far.

Culling of ducks in the infected regions would be undertaken as per Central guidelines. Disease surveillance and disinfection would be carried out in a time-bound manner, Mr. Raju said.

The Alappuzha district authorities have decided to cull birds within a 1 km radi-

us of the infected areas. The culling will begin on Tuesday. An 18-member rapid response team has been constituted for the purpose. The virus killed 1,700 ducklings in a farm in Neendoor in Kottayam on Monday. Eight teams have been formed for culling, which will begin on Tuesday morning.

While it can prove lethal for birds, the H5N8 strain of avian influenza has a lower likelihood of spreading to humans compared to H5N1, officials of the State Institute for Animal Diseases (SIAD) at Palode said.

A meeting of senior officials is scheduled for Tuesday to review the measures.