

CDC issues alert after H10N8 bird flu found in China

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The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) cautioned travelers planning to visit China to avoid coming into contact with fowl, after the country reported the world's second confirmed case of avian influenza strain H10N8 infecting a human.

The CDC said it confirmed with Chinese health authorities that the second case of H10N8 was detected in Jiangxi Province, which is where the first-ever incident of a human contracting the bird flu subtype was reported in November last year.

The agency urged the public to heed a second-level travel alert that has been issued for Jiangxi; as well as for the Chinese provinces of Guangdong, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Hunan and Fujian; and the cities of Shanghai and Beijing.

The rest of China — excluding Hong Kong and Macau — is under “watch” status, it added.

The H10N8 virus was previously detected at a live poultry market in China's Guangdong Province and in its South Dongting Lake wetland, as well as in samples from migratory birds and poultry in Japan, South Korea, the US, Italy and Sweden, the agencies said.

The Council of Agriculture in 2005 detected the virus in feces at an aquatic bird habitat in Taiwan, but has not found the strain in any local poultry, the CDC said.

Experiments have shown that H10N8 is low pathogenic virus — meaning that it will likely be asymptomatic or cause only mild illness in birds, as opposed to the severe disease brought on by a highly pathogenic strain — the centers said, but added that the flu subtype requires further monitoring as it has the potential to infect mammals virulently.

However, the CDC said that genetic analysis of the H10N8 strain isolated from the Chinese patient has not shown any indication of genetic recombination with human flu viruses, suggesting that there is little risk of widespread human-to-human transmission.

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None of the 250,000 samples collected from flu and unexplained pneumonia patients in Taiwan since 1999 have contained the H10N8 subtype, the agency added.

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