



**JOINT STATEMENT BY THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH,
KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA, AND THE WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION (WHO)**



**No evidence of a mutated strain of avian influenza in Cambodia
25th November 2005**

Recent reports from the media mentioned that a mutated strain of bird flu has been found in samples taken in Cambodia. The Ministry of Health of the Royal Government of Cambodia and the World Health Organisation would like confirm that there is no evidence of a strain of avian influenza with significant mutations in Cambodia.

Cambodia reported four human cases of avian influenza in 2005. There have been no new cases since the last reported case in April 2005. The samples from the four Cambodian cases have been sent to a WHO Reference Laboratory, which found that the viruses from Cambodia were similar to those detected in other countries in the region.

Influenza viruses, in general, are unstable and show constant small changes in their structure. But most of these small changes do not alter the virus characteristics. The viruses from Cambodia showed some minor changes, which are part of the normal instability of the virus. However, there is no evidence of any major changes that make it easier for the virus to jump from animals to humans.

At the time the cases were reported in Cambodia, rapid field investigations were launched to determine if there was any evidence that the virus had changed and improved its transmissibility. There was no evidence of improved efficiency of transfer from animals to humans and no evidence of efficient, sustained transmission from human to human. Complementary laboratory research studies on avian influenza viruses from all countries are continuing, to improve our understanding of the virus and its transmission.

The Ministry of Health, with support from the World Health Organisation, Institute Pasteur in Cambodia and other partners, is continuing to strengthen the surveillance and response system for avian influenza. The focus of the surveillance system is to detect cases as early as possible, conduct field investigations and provide laboratory diagnosis from Institute Pasteur in Cambodia within 24 hours of sample collection.

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