

China reports 79 deaths from H7N9 bird flu in January

China reported 79 fatalities from H7N9 avian flu in January, health authorities said Wednesday.

Since the beginning of the year, 16 provincial regions have reported human H7N9 avian flu cases, with 192 cases in January, according to the National Health and Family Planning Commission.

From Feb. 6 to 12, 69 such cases were reported across the country, including eight fatalities.

In China, most cases were around the Yangtze River Delta and Pearl River Delta areas, said Shu Yuelong, director of the Chinese National Influenza Center.

Contact with infected poultry and exposure to live poultry markets pose risks of infection, Shu said, adding that evidence rules out sustained human-to-human transmission of avian flu.

Health authorities are implementing a raft of measures to address the situation, including improving surveillance and risk assessment, more training for medical staff, and allocating medical resources more effectively.

Half of Scotland's courts now taking longer to process cases

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Half of Scotland's courts now taking longer to process cases

15 Feb 2017



Half of Scotland's sheriff courts are taking longer to process cases than they were a year ago, new figures have revealed.

In total, more than 30 per cent are now failing to hit the 26-week target from issuing a caution or charge to reaching a verdict.

That compares to 73 per cent for the same period the previous year, with eight courts failing to even get 60 per cent of cases concluded on time.

Only two facilities – in Portree and Stornoway – managed to get all cases wrapped up within the six-month timeframe.

And of Scotland's 40 sheriff courts, 19 are performing more poorly than a year ago.

It suggests courts across the country are struggling to cope with a series of closures embarked upon by the SNP in recent years.

One in five sheriff and justice of the peace courts closed, despite warnings of an increased workload for those remaining and inconvenience for victims and witnesses.

The statistics were revealed following a parliamentary question by Scottish Conservative chief whip John Lamont.

They show, in November 2016, 69.8 per cent of cases were dealt with in time, compared to 73.24 per cent for November 2015.

The Scottish Conservatives warned against court closures, arguing delays like this would occur, while lawyers have also been critical of the decision.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:

"This is another example of the SNP being warned against making a decision for a number of reasons, but blundering on anyway.

"Now it's taking longer to get cases through court, and many will feel that's a direct result of the SNP's closure programme.

"This doesn't just have an adverse impact on the staff left to sort this out, but it also creates inconvenience for witnesses and victims of crime.

"Now that the SNP has shut these courts right across the country, the least it could do is ensure those remaining have sufficient resources to see cases through to their conclusion in the target timeframe."

Notes to editors:

To see a copy of the data obtained by the Scottish Conservatives, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Copy-of-Court-cases-PQ.xlsx>

The Scottish Conservatives have consistently criticised the SNP for the programme of court closures:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2015/09/sheriff-courts-less-efficient-in-wake-of-snp-closure-programme/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2013/03/snp-hasnt-thought-through-court->

[closures/](#)

Shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross quizzed Michael Matheson on the issue at a recent Holyrood justice committee:

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10723>

Today's productivity figures again confirm the Tories' failure on productivity growth – Peter Dowd

"Today's productivity figures again confirm the Tories' failure on productivity growth, a crucial component of rising living standards.

"This is yet more worrying news given figures this week showing inflation rising and wage growth slowing, squeezing household incomes.

"The ONS says productivity growth "remains weak", and Philip Hammond has previously admitted that the UK's productivity gap is "shocking". Yet the Tories have no plan to tackle the problem.

"Only Labour can end the Tories' rigged economy with a serious plan to invest in our future to raise our productivity, and create the high wage, high skill economy of the future."

Actions matter, and this Government has done nothing to show it will actually support the UK steel industry – Gill Furniss

Gill Furniss MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Steel, Postal Services and Consumer Protection, commenting on reports that Tata steelworkers have

voted to accept Tata's new pension scheme deal, said:

"This was always going to be a tough decision but we should recognise the fantastic work trade unions have done in getting the deal that has been accepted today. Thousands of steelworkers at Port Talbot now have job security for the next five years and they deserve the certainty that today's result brings.

"Steel is a vital foundation industry for the UK. That is why it is important that today we have got a way forward for the Port Talbot steelworks, and that is why Labour will keep pressing the Government to give the steel sector the support it deserves.

"That means not marking steel 'low-priority' in the Brexit negotiations and not giving steel just one mention in the whole industrial strategy green paper. Actions matter, and this Government has done nothing to show it will actually support the UK steel industry."

Press release: Valentine's Day of action against illegal waste activity

Environment Agency enforcement officers, on the 14 February, paid unannounced visits to 14 sites across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Surrey, Hampshire and West Berkshire in a bid to stamp out waste crime and protect the environment from the threat of pollution.

Named Operation Arrow, officers targeted sites suspected of operating in the waste business without the required environmental permits, flouting the law and committing crime.

Waste that ends up at unregulated sites is often stockpiled in vast quantities and for long periods of time. The waste can pose a significant risks to the environment, blighting communities with smoke fumes and causing noise and odour complaints. Illegal waste operators also undermine the work of legitimate waste companies, creating an unfair playing field for business.

Helen Page, Enforcement Team Leader at the Environment Agency said:

We want to make sure the right waste goes to the right place – to protect the environment and local communities. Site visits on our days of action are just one of the ways we are tackling waste crime to help make sure this happens.

We are really pleased with what we achieved. Of the 14 sites visited, 5 were found to be operating illegally. The information we have gathered is helping us target our work at those involved in organised environmental crime and where their activities pose the greatest risk to the environment.

Everyone can do their bit to reduce waste crime by making sure that any waste for disposal is collected by a licensed waste carrier and taken to a properly permitted, legitimate waste site.

To check if someone is registered please visit
environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers.

For all media enquiries please phone 0800 141 2743, or email us at
southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk