

China steps up human H7N9 avian flu prevention

A number of provinces in China have stepped up efforts to prevent H7N9 avian flu following reports of scattered human cases of the virus.

Authorities closed 280 live poultry trading and slaughtering venues in Suining city, southwest China's Sichuan Province, after four human H7N9 cases were reported in the city this year, according to the provincial health authorities.

Commerce officials in Suining have enhanced inspections to crack down on unlicensed poultry businesses.

The central province of Hubei has set up headquarters for the prevention and control of human H7N9 outbreak, according to the provincial Health and Family Planning Commission.

Hubei confirmed 19 human H7N9 cases from Jan.1 to Feb. 9, scattered across several cities. Two patients have been discharged from hospital after recovering. The province has dispatched 16 inspection teams to check on prevention efforts.

In Changsha, capital of central China's Hunan Province, all live poultry markets have been suspended. The province has reported 24 H7N9 cases, including five fatalities, this year.

Eastern China's Zhejiang Province ordered all markets across the province to halt live poultry trading by 6 p.m. Saturday, over bird flu concerns.

Staff with the Zhejiang Center for Disease Control and Prevention said that the province had entered a high season of bird flu outbreak.

In January alone, Zhejiang reported 35 infections of the H7N9 strain of bird flu. Contact with live poultry is the major source of infection, particularly in rural areas.

H7N9 is a bird flu strain first reported to have infected humans in China in March 2013. It is most likely to strike in winter and spring.

Beijing on Saturday reported a human H7N9 case. The patient is a 68-year-old man from Langfang city in neighboring Hebei Province.

Liaoning, Jiangsu, Shandong, Henan, Guangdong and Guizhou provinces have all reported human H7N9 cases this year.

Beijingers buy less fireworks during Spring Festival

Beijing saw a 30.5 percent fall in fireworks and firecracker sales during Spring Festival compared to last year, mainly due to pollution concerns, according to municipal authorities Sunday.

It is the sixth consecutive annual decline since 2012, according to the fireworks office of the municipal government. Firework-caused fires and injuries also dropped in the capital.

Spring Festival is the most important festival in the Chinese calendar. This year it fell on Jan. 28, the first day of the Chinese Lunar New Year.

The main celebration period traditionally lasts from the New Year's Eve to the 15th day of the first lunar month, or Lantern Festival.

Since Sunday, Beijing resumed its fireworks ban within the fifth ring road.

Nationwide, 444 cities have banned fireworks and 764 other cities imposed fireworks restrictions.

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The circular clarified procedures for the removal of immovable cultural relic status, and said that if such cultural relics were destroyed by natural disasters or construction activity, authorities should review and establish whether they still had heritage value.

Authorities should also publish such information and solicit public opinion.

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Migrants' ID card renewal now easier

Domestic migrants who have lost or need to renew their identification cards can now apply for a replacement in localities other than where their "hukou" (household registration) is registered.

The Ministry of Public Security on Saturday said public security departments nationwide have issued nearly five million new identification cards under this new rule.

The reform has made the process much more convenient, according to the ministry.

With rapid economic and social development, China's rural migrant worker population continues to grow. Official statistics released last April put the number at more than 277 million in 2015, up 1.3 percent from the previous year.

The 15th meeting of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform in

August 2015 adopted a document that committed the country to cutting red tape, which included the ID card renewal measure.