

Hong Kong girl tests negative for H7N9 (Update)

5 April 2013

A seven-year-old Hong Kong girl has tested negative for the H7N9 flu virus, officials said Friday, after she became the city's first suspected case of the disease that has killed six killed on mainland China.

The girl, who had visited Shanghai in late March and had contact with poultry, was hospitalised after she showed flu-like symptoms including fever.

"Preliminary laboratory test results for the respiratory specimens of the seven-year-old girl today showed negative" for the virus, a spokesman from the Centre for Health Protection said.

The H7N9 flu virus has killed six in China and prompted the closure of all live poultry markets in Shanghai as well as the culling of over 20,000 birds.

Hong Kong's Health Minister Ko Wing-man said the city would step up random testing of local poultry and mobilise additional staff to carry out body temperature checks on inbound travellers at the border with the mainland.

He added that a ban on imports of of poultry from mainland China was not necessary at the moment.

Hong Kong was the site of the world's first major outbreak of bird flu among humans in 1997, when six people died from a mutated form of the virus, which is normally confined to poultry. Millions of birds were then culled.

Experts are concerned that the H7N9 virus appears to have spread across a wide geographical area, with people sickened not only in Shanghai, but also the nearby provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Anhui.

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