First Human Infection of Avian Influenza A(H5N6) Virus Reported in Lao People's Democratic Republic, February-March 2021

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Abstract

In March 2021, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos) reported an avian influenza A(H5N6) virus infection in a 5-year-old child identified through sentinel surveillance. This was the first human A(H5N6) infection reported outside of China. A multidisciplinary investigation undertook contact tracing and enhanced human and animal surveillance in surrounding villages and live bird markets. Seven Muscovy ducks tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza A(H5N6) viruses. Sequenced viruses belonged to clade 2.3.4.4h and were closely related to viruses detected in poultry in Vietnam, and to previous viruses detected in Laos. Surveillance and coordinated outbreak response remain essential to global health security.

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