

MIDDAY EXPRESS

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Avian influenza: EU expert flies to Vietnam

A European Union animal health expert is today flying to Vietnam to help control the avian influenza outbreak there. The EU expert is being dispatched in response to a call by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) for international assistance in tackling the spread of the disease in several Asian countries (see: [IP/04/64](#) and <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/releases/2004/pr7/en/>). He will work with the Vietnamese authorities as part of a WHO lead team and provide advice on how to eradicate the disease from the country's poultry farms. Avian influenza, so-called "bird flu", is highly contagious amongst chickens and other birds but is usually difficult for humans to catch. Nonetheless, a total of eight people have died of the disease during the current outbreak in Asia, six of them in Vietnam. The WHO has warned of the danger of the virus evolving into a highly contagious strain of human influenza. For the moment, though, contact with infected birds is the only way for humans to catch the virus and so containing the disease in the animal population is the focus of efforts by government and international organisations. As well as the outbreak in Vietnam, cases of avian influenza have been confirmed in Cambodia, China, Laos, Indonesia, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and South Korea. The EU does not import poultry or poultry meat from any of the countries hit by the outbreak, other than Thailand. Imports of poultry products from Thailand into the EU were suspended after confirmation of the outbreak there (see [IP/04/95](#)).

Further information:

Avian influenza and animal health:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/animal/diseases/controlmeasures/avian_en.htm

Avian influenza and humans:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_threats/com/Influenza/avian_influenza_en.htm

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