

# REVIEW H5N1 CONTAINMENT PLAN

PROF DR  
ABDUL  
RAHMAN  
OMAR

Members of  
the public should  
not take things  
lightly

**“ Immediate banning of the movement of poultry from the infected areas to other places and continuous surveillance of the occurrence of new cases of H5N1 should be strictly implemented.**

**I**S our strategy in controlling H5N1 in chicken effective? It was nearly 10 years ago when Malaysia last detected the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 in chickens.

In the past few weeks, cases of H5N1 have been reported in village chickens and game birds in a few districts in Kelantan.

This resembles the first case of H5N1 reported in the country in 2004.

However, not much is known about this elusive virus.

A study is underway to deter-

mine the origin of the virus and whether the isolated viruses from the chickens, express receptors that are important for human infection.

Based on what we know of previously characterised H5N1 cases in Malaysia and other countries, the virus is highly contagious and fatal to chickens.

It has a limited capability of causing human infection unless they are in close contact with the infected animals.

Furthermore, there is no clear evidence that the virus can cause human-to-human transmission, as what was reported in the 2009 flu pandemic or swine flu H1N1 influenza.

However, the public should not take things lightly, especially poultry farmers and personnel who handle live and dead chick-

ens from the infected areas.

They should exercise extreme caution as H5N1 can cause fatal infection in humans.

A World Health Organisation (WHO) report confirmed 856 cases of H5N1 infection in humans have been reported from 2003 to this year, with a case fatality rate of 53 per cent, the highest number of cases being in Egypt, Indonesia and Vietnam.

It is important to note that these are among the few other countries in the world that vaccinate against H5N1 in chickens.

Malaysia has vast experience in controlling outbreaks of zoonotic diseases – such as the Nipah virus, Japanese encephalitis, rabies and HPAI – effectively.

The best strategy to control the disease is strict biosecurity and stamping out of infected chickens within a 10km radius of infected areas.

Immediate banning of the movement of poultry from the infected areas to other places and continuous surveillance of the occurrence of new cases of H5N1 should be implemented.

Although the use of antiviral drugs to control the virus in chicken is uncommon, sequence analysis of the recently isolated H5N1 infected chickens will let us know whether the virus has developed resistance antiviral drugs, such as amantadine and oseltamivir, that are being used to treat influenza in humans.

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## Show a variety of commercials on bus digital screens

**I USE** public transport regularly. As my office is about 12km from my house, taking public transport to the office is convenient.

Every day, I would ride on the light rail transit and switch to a RapidKL bus to get to my office.

Being on the bus for 30 min-

utes can be boring. The only entertainment is from the two television screens dedicated to advertisements.

Left with no choice, passengers watch the advertisements and, surprisingly, they are pretty entertaining.

However, the setback is that very few advertisements are aired and they are shown repeatedly.

It gets excruciatingly boring being fed the same advertisements, every single day.

Some of the passengers have

even memorised the dialogues of the commercials!

I urge advertisers to air more commercials on these digital screens.

This is a great platform to reach the masses.

Bear in mind that millions of

people use public transport every day. By advertising on these modes of transport, advertisers can engage millions of people daily.

**SITI IRINA RIDZWAN**

Kuala Lumpur