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**MEDIA RELEASE BY
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF VETERINARY SERVICES MALAYSIA
ON**

**LATEST UPDATE ON AVIAN INFLUENZA A (H7N9) OUTBREAK IN HUMAN IN
CHINA AND PRE-EMPTIVE MEASURES UNDERTAKEN BY DVS TO PREVENT ENTRY
INTO MALAYSIA BY ENHANCING BIOSECURITY AND DISEASE PREPAREDNESS
PROGRAMMES.**

Update of H7N9 Control in China

The H7N9 Avian Influenza (AI) has been brought under effective control in China. The Ministry of Agriculture of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Ministry of Health in collaboration with World Animal Health Office (OIE), World Health Organization (WHO) and Food Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has jointly delivered the statement on 30th April, 2013. One of the key finding by the group from information and data collected during the episode concluded that, there is low risk of H7N9 outbreak in commercial poultry farms. The risk of human infection is strongly linked to live bird markets where poultry may have been sourced from small-scale and backyard poultry farming.

Another important finding is that, it is safe to eat properly-prepared and cooked poultry meat and eggs. The H7N9 virus being enveloped virus is very heat fragile and can be easily destroyed (inactivated) by normal cooking of 70 degrees Celcius.

To date, China has reported occurrence of cases of H7N9 in 8 provinces across the country with 31 human fatalities.

Action Taken by DVS

As of 15 April 2013, the DVS has temporarily suspended importation of live birds including poultry from all regions of Asia, South Africa and Mexico. As of 23 April 2013, The DVS has suspended importation of frozen, deboned chicken cuts from China. However, of the 98 import permits that were issued prior to the H7N9 outbreak, a total of 41 containers were *on-water*, therefore need to be handled accordingly. The DVS in collaboration with Malaysian Quarantine and Inspection Services (MAQIS) has applied a **Hold-Test-Release** procedure on all these containers where samples were taken for thorough laboratory investigation that include all virus detection (including H7N9 and H5N1 subtypes) and virus isolation conducted by Veterinary Research Institute at Ipoh and network of Regional Veterinary Laboratories in Penang, Selangor, Pahang, Johor, Kelantan, Sarawak and Sabah. As of 11 May, 2013, all samples taken from the landed containers showed negative results to H7N9 and H5N1 viruses.

The application of Hold-Test-Release procedure adopted by the DVS is in accordance with the international OIE science-based standards as published in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Vol. 2, Chapter 10.4). Malaysia has adopted this approach to safeguard public health and safety while not contravening WTO practices through imposition of unjustified trade barriers.

In addition to poultry meat import, all permit for importation of feathers (from duck) and eggs and egg products from China has been temporarily suspended.

Pre-emptive Measure Undertaken by DVS

Active surveillance were conducted at all premises where live poultry and exotic species of birds resides such a commercial and back-yard chicken and duck farms, bird sanctuaries, wild bird roosting places, wet markets, pets shop and entry points along the Malaysia-Thailand and Malaysia-Indonesia borders. The surveillance was part of the on-going National Animal Disease Control Programme which was first executed in 2004.

To date, findings from the surveillance programme in all species of birds and poultry where 41,882 samples were taken have not detected positive result to H7N9 virus subtype. The DVS will expand the surveillance programme to include more locations until the end of the year.

As a respond to the media report on calls to stop chicken from china (The STAR Nation, Friday 10 May 2013) the DVS has officially informed the Federation of Livestock Farm Associations of Malaysia (FLFAM) secretary of the government action to temporarily stop importation of poultry products from China. The DVS and FLFAM (Poultry Unit) has a regular meeting every month to discuss local poultry industry-related matters at the DVS Head Office in Putrajaya. The DVS has stopped allowing containers carrying poultry products from China as of **23 April, 2013**. Only containers considered or proven *on-water* i.e. has left approved port of exit in China before 23 April 2013 while en-route to Malaysia will be allowed to land by MAQIS at the Malaysian ports. Of the 98 import permits issued as of that stoppage date, a total of 41 containers from five major chicken processing companies have been thoroughly examined and found to be negative to the H7N9 virus subtype. The DVS and MAQIS is fully satisfied with the action and permits to bring in more containers will be temporarily frozen until the H7N9 situation subsided.

As to the statement made by the secretary-general of PPIM, Dato Dr Maamor Osman, the DVS has stopped incoming batches of import from China effective on the stoppage date of 23 April, 2013. Only containers on-water prior to that were allowed in only after satisfying the Hold-Test-Release procedures by MAQIS and DVS.

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