

# Dept acts to contain poultry disease outbreak

**KUALA LUMPUR** — The Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) has swung into action to contain an infectious bronchitis (IB) outbreak which has killed thousands of farmed chickens.

Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry deputy secretary-general (policy) Mohd Sallehuddin Hassan said some poultry farmers did not use IB vaccines while some claimed the existing vaccine stocks were no longer effective.

“Department staff have gone to the farms concerned to find out what is really happening,” he said after attending the Malaysian Fisheries Development Authority’s Hari Raya open house in Puchong yesterday.

“We are worried of manipulation by suppliers to hike prices. We do not deny there is an outbreak (of IB). It is not uncommon, just that the price of chicken has skyrocketed this festive season.”

Sallehuddin said his ministry did not dismiss the possibility of the need for new vaccine stocks if it was true the existing stocks were not effective.

Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry deputy director of enforcement Ahmad Dahuri Mahmud said the ministry would wait for feedback from retailers.

“If they did it (hike prices) on purpose, we will take action,” he said.

The price of chicken nationwide has reportedly risen to RM10 per kg from RM7.90 since Thursday.

Yesterday, the Selangor Poultry Farmers Association in its newsletter claimed IB, which causes breathing complications in chickens, had killed thousands of birds, resulting in a 20 per cent drop in chicken production in the country.

However, Veterinary Services director-general Datuk Dr Kamarudin Mat Isa dismissed the claim.

“As of this month, we only detected six IB incidents among commercial and domestic chicken — one in Kedah and five in Perak. So, chicken deaths due to IB is not as high as claimed,” he said.

Dr Kamarudin stressed IB was an endemic viral disease which could be controlled with vaccine injections.



Traders at Pasar Datuk Keramat in Kuala Lumpur prepare poultry for sale. The outbreak of infectious bronchitis is said to have killed thousands of farmed chickens and caused prices to increase. — Picture by Azneal Ishak

“DVS has approved 14 types of vaccines for IB prevention. Rearers and chicken supply contractors, on our advice, can use any of the vaccines,” he said.

Dr Kamarudin said the department would study samples of chicken that allegedly died from IB.

“IB is not a new disease that has just emerged in the country,” he said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia’s Tropical Agriculture Institute director Prof Dr Zulkifli Idrus believed instead of IB, it was production costs which caused the price hike.

“Many factors may contribute to the price increase. One is chicken feed, which has increased by RM200, to RM1,800 per tonne. Another factor is the hot weather,

which can slow the chicken’s growth,” he said.

Zulkifli, an expert in poultry production, said the festive season could also cause demand to exceed supply, tempting retailers to take advantage.

“During the festive season, even chickens weighing less than 2kg are being sold,” he said. — Bernama