



Medical officers conduct a simulation exercise at Kampung Paya Jaras yesterday. — Picture by Dhivya Suresh

Heatwave bane to viruses

PETALING JAYA — The scorching heat is keeping viruses transmitted by animals to humans at bay, said Veterinary Services Department director-general Datuk Dr Kamarudin Md Isa.

He said this was because high temperatures and strong ultraviolet rays were a threat to the survival of zoonotic viruses like the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), commonly known as bird flu.

Zoonotic viruses are infectious viruses that can be passed between animals and humans.

“Such viruses can’t survive in high temperatures, so the transition to another bird or even a person is difficult,” Kamarudin said at an HPAI simulation exercise held at Kampung Paya Jaras, Sungai Buloh, yesterday.

“It is highly likely that the virus will die while making the transition and before it

actually infects the next host.”

Kamarudin said the department would continue to take precautionary measures against the bird flu virus despite Malaysia being declared free from it since 2007.

“Even though we are free from the virus, many neighbouring countries still have cases of such outbreaks and they still pose a risk to us,” he said.

He said the virus was also adept at mutating into different subtypes of the existing virus because of its evolutionary traits, making global eradication impossible.

Citing Indonesia as an example, he said an import ban on all poultry products was imposed on countries that have an ongoing outbreak of the bird flu.

On the simulation exercise, Kamarudin said it was an annual affair held in conjunction of the Asean HPAI Task Force Meeting.