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## Hong Kong Slaughters Chickens After Bird Flu Found (Update2)

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June 11 (Bloomberg) -- Hong Kong ordered the slaughter of all chickens in the city's markets and retail outlets after the H5N1 bird flu virus was detected in three more markets.

The H5N1 avian influenza virus has been found in four markets since the first outbreak last week, the government said at a press briefing today. Hong Kong banned poultry imports from mainland China and suspended exports from local farms for as long as 21 days on June 7.

Public health officials' concerns about a worldwide outbreak of lethal influenza among humans have risen as the H5N1 virus spreads among birds from Asia to Europe, Africa and the Middle East. The deadly strain may spark a global outbreak if it mutates to become as infectious to humans as seasonal flu.

"Public health is a major concern for the government," said **Alice Lau**, deputy director of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. "We need to make sure the message, the need to preserve hygiene, gets through to the public."

About 3,500 chickens are being killed at about 470 stores, with vendors paid HK\$30 (\$3.84) for each bird, according to the government. Tests are being conducted at bird farms to determine whether further action is needed, it said.

The government has stepped up efforts to halt the spread of the virus after ordering the culling of 2,700 chickens from nine stalls at the Po On Road Market on June 7. The virus was detected in bird feces, and no animal or human deaths have been linked to the disease, the government said.

None of the samples taken from chicken farms in Hong Kong have shown the virus, said Cheng Siu-hing, director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation. Culls will be conducted on farms should the virus be detected, she said.

The government said it may extend the 21-day suspension of poultry imports from China and exports from local farms should the situation require it.

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