Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report

Human infection with H5N1 virus

January 2024

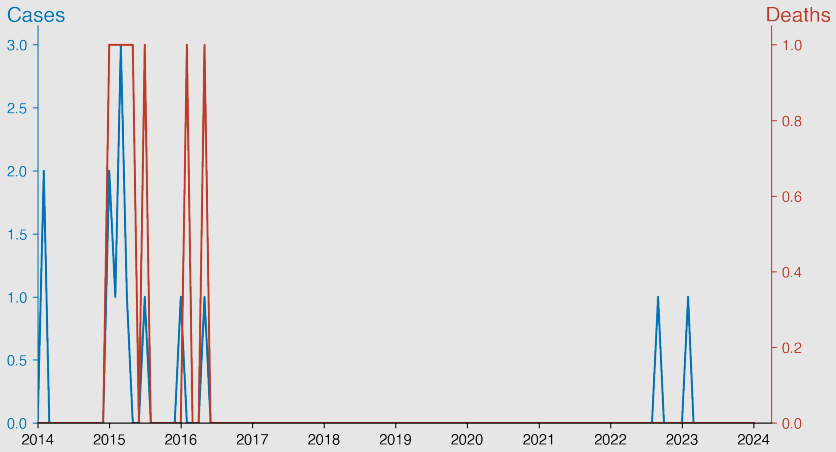
Introduction

The H5N1 virus, a highly pathogenic avian influenza strain, primarily infects birds but has made the jump to humans in certain cases, often through direct or indirect contact with infected poultry. First identified in humans in 1997, H5N1 infections in people can lead to severe respiratory illness and are associated with high mortality rates. Though human-to-human transmission is rare, the virus's potential to cause a pandemic if it evolves to spread more easily between people is a significant concern for global health authorities.

Highlights

- **Sporadic cases:** Data shows occasional H5N1 infections in Chinese mainland, with few cases and deaths, highlighting sporadic nature.
- **Declining trend:** A clear trend towards zero cases and deaths post-2015, indicating effective control measures.
- **2015 peak:** Notable peak in 2015, with March witnessing 3 cases and 1 death, suggesting a transient spike in transmission or detection.
- **Successful containment:** Zero cases or deaths since early 2023, reflecting strong containment and surveillance efforts.

Temporal Trend



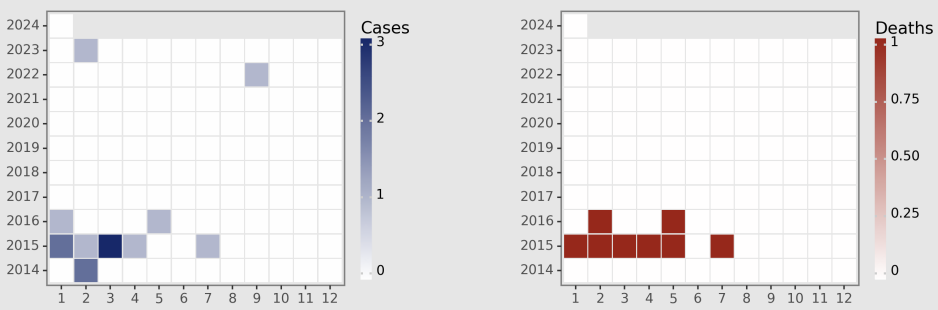
Cases Analysis

Between 2014 and 2024, Chinese mainland reported a sporadic occurrence of human infections with the H5N1 virus, totaling 11 cases. Notably, the years 2015 and 2016 witnessed a slight uptick in cases, with 2015 reporting the highest annual case number (8). The distribution of cases over the years suggests a highly controlled situation, with long periods of no reported cases, indicating effective public health measures and surveillance systems in place to manage and prevent H5N1 outbreaks.

Deaths Analysis

The death toll associated with H5N1 infections over the same period amounts to 7, suggesting a high case fatality rate among the reported cases. The deaths were concentrated in 2015 and 2016, coinciding with the peak in reported cases. After 2016, there was only one more death reported in 2022 despite the low number of cases, indicating either improved clinical management or the sporadic nature of severe cases. The data implies that while infections are rare, the lethality of H5N1 remains a significant concern.

Distribution



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Version: 2024-03-04 (UTC+)

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