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OPINION: THE DRAMATIC AVIAN INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC AND THE PIG CONNECTION

Abstract

During late 2003 and early 2004 avian influenza (AI) ravaged East Asia (Japan, China, Korea) and South East Asia (Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia), killing millions of chickens and infecting humans, some of them fatal: 79 infected, 49 deaths (62%!). The virus responsible for the epidemic is known as the H5N1 strain of subtype A Avian Influenza virus, a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus. Many subtypes AI virus are of low pathogenicity (low pathogenic influenza virus, LPAI), giving no symptoms (subclinical) or only local mild symptoms, but some, including the H5N1 subtype, trigger a severe systemic symptoms resulting in a high death rate. The H5N1 notation pertains to two viral surface proteins that the virus used to bind and enter host cells, namely: haemaglutinine (H) and neuraminidase (N). There are 15 different H alleles (H1–H15) and 9 different N alleles (N1–N9).

Keyword: - , - ,

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