

Press Release from State Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory, AH&VS Department

An unusual mortality of pigeons and crows has recently been reported from various areas within the state, with some birds exhibiting symptoms such as torticollis, circling movement, droopiness, lethargy, and depression. Following these reports, immediate action was initiated by the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department to assess and control the situation.

A Rapid Response Team comprising veterinarians, para-veterinarians, and laboratory personnel from the affected areas of Namchi, Ranipool, Bardang, and Tadong was promptly deployed to the reported sites. The team carried out field investigations, collected samples from affected birds, and conducted thorough disinfection of the surrounding areas to prevent further spread.

Symptomatic birds in the affected localities were provided supportive treatment, including antibiotics, as part of immediate disease management measures.

Collected clinical samples of affected pigeon were processed at the State Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (SADDL) for detailed examination. Laboratory investigations revealed the presence of *Haemoproteus columbae* and *Eimeria* species. Prevalence of *Haemoproteus columbae* in pigeons can be influenced by stress factors such as parasitic infestations, nutritional deficiencies and environmental stressors. These parasitic infections are commonly reported in pigeon and are not associated with zoonotic transmission.

Importantly, the samples were also tested for Ranikhet Disease (Newcastle Disease Virus – NDV), and the results were found to be negative. Additionally, bacteriological examinations were conducted, which also yielded negative findings, thereby ruling out major bacterial causes of mortality.

For further confirmation and as a precautionary surveillance measure, clinical samples were forwarded to the designated laboratories- Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratory, Eastern Region (RDDL, ER) Kolkata, for toxicological analysis and Avian Influenza, and to the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal. Results from these laboratories are currently awaited.

The State Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory routinely conducts annual screening and surveillance of Avian Influenza through designated national laboratories, and no confirmed cases of Avian Influenza have been detected to date. Similar instances of mortality of pigeons have been observed during the winter season in the previous year as well however, no confirmed cases of Avian Influenza have been reported so far.

The department continues to closely monitor the situation and urges the public to report any unusual bird deaths to the nearest veterinary office while avoiding direct handling of dead or sick birds.