

H3N8 variant of Bird Flu

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In news- China's central province of Henan has reported the first human infection of the H3N8 strain of bird flu recently.

About H3N8 strain of bird flu-

- H3N8 is known to have been circulating since 2002 after first emerging in North American waterfowl.
- It is known to infect horses, dogs and seals, but has not previously been detected in humans.
- Many different strains of bird flu are present in China and some sporadically infect people, usually those working with poultry.
- Last year China reported the first human case of H10N3.
- H10N3 is a subtype of viruses that **causes influenza (flu)** and is mostly present in wild avian species.
- Avian influenza occurs mainly in wild birds and poultry and cases of transmission between humans are extremely rare.
- The **H5N1 and H7N9 strains of bird flu**, detected in 1997 and 2013, respectively, have been responsible for most cases of human illness from avian influenza.

What is avian influenza or bird flu?

- It is a highly contagious viral disease caused by Influenza Type A viruses which generally affects poultry birds such as chickens and turkeys.
- There are many strains of the virus – some of them are mild and may merely cause a low egg production or other mild symptoms, while others are severe and lethal.
- Wild aquatic birds such as ducks and geese are the natural reservoir of Influenza A viruses and the central players in the ecology of these viruses.
- It was in 1997 when humans are first known to have contracted bird flu following an outbreak in a live bird

market of Hong Kong.

- Unlike in birds, where it generally infects the gut, the avian influenza attacks the respiratory tract of humans and may cause severe respiratory illnesses such as pneumonia or Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS).
- Its early symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, and sometimes abdominal pain and diarrhoea.