



EMERGENCY CENTRE FOR TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES • FAO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

# GOING BATS

*FAO brings home the message about the role wildlife plays in emerging infectious diseases in the region*

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supports a series of wildlife-related activities in Thailand, the Philippines and Viet Nam with funding support from the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). These activities address lack of wildlife health capacity and aim to improve understanding of the role of wildlife in emerging infectious diseases including diseases that affect both livestock and human health. The goal of the DAFF project is to enhance national as well as regional capacity and improve the understanding of specific diseases that pose risks to livestock production and public health, using the Nipah virus and flying foxes as a model for risk assessment at the interface.

While capacity for national and regional disease surveillance, outbreak response, control and prevention in the agricultural sector has been developed to certain level, there is limited wildlife health capacity, specifically in areas related to wildlife epidemiology including surveillance, risk assessment and outbreak response at the interface with domestic animals. Most importantly, wildlife ecology (habitat use, foraging ecology, and behaviour)

*Continued overleaf*



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1. A flying fox (*Pteropus lylei*) with GPS transmitter attached.
2. A Thai bat biologist and veterinarian anesthetize and tag a flying fox in Viet Nam under the supervision of German bat expert Ms Natalie Weber (in back).
3. A fruit bat released by a Philippines bat expert after processing and sample collection.
4. A wildlife veterinarian from Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Thailand, demonstrates flying fox anatomy and how to obtain blood sample.

is not well understood although it is one of the important factors that drives the role of wildlife in emerging infectious diseases, livestock diseases and zoonoses.

Activities implemented in these three countries add value to the ongoing activities implemented in the region under the One Health approach. For example, the DAFF project, titled *Study of bats ecology and their risks for emerging infectious diseases*, added flying fox ecology studies using GPS technology to the Thailand Research Fund-Chulalongkorn University (TRF-CU) Bat-Pig-People Program implemented in 2011-2013. Data on flying fox movement will help understand disease ecology better and help formulate sound policy recommendations for mitigating the risk of disease transmission and for risk communication.

In Viet Nam, an FAO-led project allows bat experts to work with professionals from the animal health sector to sample flying foxes for disease surveillance and study flying fox movement for the first time. National Training Workshops on Bat Ecology were conducted in each country, attended by a total of over 80 professionals, with a Regional Training Workshop that brought 20 participants from five countries (Bangladesh, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam) to gain and share experiences as well as form a network. The Regional Bat Training Workshop is co-funded by the European Union's Highly Pathogenic Emerging Diseases (EU-HPED) program.



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1. Thai participants are trained on bat capture with mobile mist-netting at Wat Luang, Chonburi Province.  
2. Philippines bat capture team members at Ninoy Aquino Park and Wildlife Center.



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# The global IDENTIFY family meets

As the project enters the fourth of its five years, the FAO/IDENTIFY inter-regional teams meet in Bangkok

The IDENTIFY project, implemented by FAO, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is in the fourth of its five years. A strategic inter-regional meeting of FAO/IDENTIFY teams (global, regional and national focal points) was held from 4-6 March in Bangkok, Thailand, to discuss implemented activities, successes and challenges, and to prepare for the future.

Major issues identified for inter-regional

discussion included laboratory policy and sustainability of laboratory activities supported under IDENTIFY, the future of laboratories in the context of new technology developments and some of the key linkages between laboratory and epidemio-surveillance activities.

The specific objectives of the conference included a review of laboratory status and activities in all regions; a discussion of specific technical and strategic issues

implemented under IDENTIFY across the region to develop a shared understanding; to agree on a common approach and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation framework; to agree on communication products and messages; to plan beyond the end of the IDENTIFY project and EPT; and to build an FAO inter-regional core team of animal health laboratory focal points for FAO's strategic role in laboratory strengthening and networking in the future.

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