

Vela develops genetic tests for H7N9 bird flu

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Singapore: Vela Diagnostics has launched PCR-based Research-Use-Only (RUO) tests for the identification of genetic targets specific to a new strain of bird flu (H7N9), as well as a highly virulent strain of coronavirus (hCoV-EMC).

On concerns with both pathogens causing global outbreaks, Singapore-based Vela's H7N9 and coronavirus tests are part of a broader program directed at investigating their potential as surveillance tools for patients suspected to be infected by these novel strains of virus.

H7N9 strain of avian flu is an influenza A virus subtype, which has so far infected over 130 people and is associated with a high death rate. The new coronavirus has exhibited human-to-human transmission and has shown to cause symptoms similar to the SARS coronavirus outbreak of 2002-03, including severe acute pneumonia and death.

The tests can be run on Vela's automated Sentosa Workflow and their results can be made available in as little as four hours. Vela is in the final stage of testing with research partners.

Vela's CEO, Mr Michael Tillmann, said that, "The developments are a part of our social responsibility to provide the necessary tools and support in such situations. To this end we will work closely with experts as well as healthcare authorities worldwide."