

AVIAN INFLUENZA FACT SHEET

(BIRD FLU-----H5N1)

Avian Flu Q&A (Bird Flu)

What is Avian Flu?

Avian Flu is a Type A Influenza Virus that is principally found in and occurs naturally among birds. It is seasonal among birds and spreads rapidly among birds but rarely in humans.

Who gets Avian/bird flu?

In 1997, Public Health Officials detected the strain in Southeast Asia, 170 people were infected and 50% died. Wild birds carry the virus in their intestines, but rarely get sick. However domestic birds such as chickens, ducks, and turkeys can get very sick and die.

How is Avian/bird flu spread?

It is transmitted in birds. Infected birds shed the virus in their saliva, nasal secretions and feces. Other birds are infected by direct contact with these secretions excretions, or contaminated surfaces (cages, water, or feed).

It is transmitted in humans by direct contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces. A risk factor would be a factory-poultry worker or hand butchering infected fowl. **Reports are very rare of the virus spreading from one person to another and these cases have not been seen to continue beyond one person.**

What are the symptoms of Avian flu?

The clinical symptoms of Avian flu are very similar to seasonal flu. They are: fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, eye infections, pneumonia, severe respiratory distress. Influenza can cause life-threatening complications. Young infants can have croup, bronchiolitis and pneumonia. Influenza can alter some medications, like theophylline.

How soon after infection do symptoms appear?

There is a 1-3 day incubation period from contact with contaminated surfaces until symptoms appear. Humans are most infectious 24 hours prior to symptoms. There are rare reports of the virus spreading from one person to another. The highest attack rates are with school-aged children (10-40%), with 1% hospitalization rate. The attack rate depends on immunity within the community.

Since it is rare in humans, our immune systems have not been exposed to be able to develop enough of an immune response to fight it, an influenza pandemic could begin with the virus exchanging genes with a human virus strain or mutate into a form that is easily transmissible to and among humans.

What is the treatment of Avian flu?

The Seasonal human influenza vaccine will not provide protection. Clinical trials have been underway for specific H5N1 vaccines since April 2005. Antiviral drugs are being studied for efficacy.

How can Avian flu be prevented?

The best way to protect against a pandemic is a vaccine. The vaccine will have to contain the strain of influenza virus that is causing the problem. An effective vaccine can't be developed until the pandemic begins.

Other precautions have been taken since a vaccine for avian flu is not available, again, **the Seasonal human influenza vaccine will not provide protection.**

There is NO EVIDENCE THAT PROPERLY COOKED POULTRY OR EGGS IS A SOURCE OF INFECTION. THERE HAVE BEEN NO HUMAN INFECTIONS FROM EATING POULTRY IN AFFECTED COUNTRIES. H5N1 HAS NOT BEEN DETECTED IN THE US. THERE HAVE BEEN NO CASES OF INFECTED POULTRY IN THE US. In 2004, the US banned import of poultry from countries affected by Avian Influenza.

The US Department of Agriculture has issued guidelines for prevention of Influenza

WASH HANDS WITH WARM WATER AND SOAP FOR AT LEAST 20 SECONDS BEFORE AND AFTER HANDLING FOOD

KEEP RAW POULTRY AND ITS JUICES AWAY FROM OTHER FOODS

KEEP HANDS, UTENSIL AND SURFACES SUCH AS CUTTING BOARDS CLEAN

USE A FOOD THERMOMETER TO ENSURE POULTRY HAS BEEN FULLY COOKED

CONTACTS:

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