

Avian Influenza Virus (AVI)

This information is published for commissary patrons who want to know more about the avian influenza virus. It includes frequently asked questions and links to Web sites. (This document was updated on Feb. 7, 2007)

DeCA is well aware of this potentially serious situation and is following worldwide reports daily. All contracted sources for poultry products consumed by the U.S. military community are routinely inspected by military or civilian public health personnel who are experts in food safety. DeCA food safety officials will take prompt action to address any possible avian influenza threats to ensure all products are safe.

DeCA only procures goods from approved sources. In the continental United States, Europe, and in the Pacific all commissary products originate from a DoD-, USDA-, or FDA-approved source.

Commissaries in Japan, Okinawa and Guam sell only frozen poultry that originates from approved sources in the continental United States. These locations do not sell locally procured fresh poultry. Fresh poultry sold overseas originates from DoD locally approved sources. When available, commissaries in South Korea sell fresh poultry that originates from a DoD-approved source in South Korea. At this time commissaries in South Korea sell only frozen poultry from the continental United States. Commissaries in Europe sell frozen poultry of U.S. origin and fresh poultry from France, Italy, or Spain. All overseas commissaries offer an assortment of frozen poultry products originating from approved sources in the continental United States.

Although the majority of eggs sold in the Pacific are procured from approved sources in the continental United States, a limited number of fresh eggs are procured from DoD locally approved sources in Japan, Okinawa and South Korea. Eggs procured from DoD locally approved sources in the Pacific typically have the appearance that U.S. consumers are accustomed to because the products are regulated by DoD and USDA standards. Commissaries in Europe procure fresh eggs from DoD locally approved sources in Denmark. Eggs produced under European Union regulations differ slightly from what U.S. consumers are accustomed to purchasing. A brochure entitled "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About European Eggs" specifically addresses consumers' concerns in Europe and can be obtained at their local commissary or by calling DSN 489-7304 or commercial 0049-631-3523-108. Consumers wanting to learn more about food safety can obtain brochures from their commissary consumer information center or online at http://www.commissaries.com/food_safety.cfm

DeCA and military public health professionals are closely monitoring the AVI situation and will suspend procurement of fresh poultry or eggs from any approved source immediately in the event a strain of highly pathogenic AVI (typically H5 or H7 strain) is discovered near one of its poultry facilities. Outbreaks of other forms of lower pathogenic AVI are highly scrutinized for their public health significance. Import and export regulations vary greatly in each of the locations outside the continental United States. If a

host nation bans or quarantines poultry from a foreign source, the U.S. military will quickly follow the guidelines of the host nation.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is bird flu?

- Avian influenza, also referred to as “bird flu,” is a contagious disease of animals caused by a virus that normally only affects birds. There are several different types of avian influenza. The milder forms occur occasionally around the world. These are known as Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza or LPAI. The more serious form is known as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) because the disease is much more severe in birds, and it results in high mortality in poultry flocks.
- The most contagious strains, usually fatal in birds, are H5 and H7.
- The current type causing concern is H5N1.
- Migratory wild fowl, notably wild ducks, are natural carriers of the virus. The wild birds usually shed the flu virus in their saliva, nasal secretions, and feces.
- Domestic birds, including chickens, ducks and turkeys are particularly susceptible.

What is the risk to humans from the H5N1 virus in Asia and Europe?

- Most of the H5N1 human cases have occurred from contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces. Live poultry – chickens, ducks and other animals – in Southeast Asia often run at large in the villages in which people live. Families tend small flocks of birds to provide eggs and meat. Most of the human avian flu cases in Thailand and Vietnam are linked to these forms of “village chickens.”
- The spread of H5N1 virus from person to person has been rare and has not continued beyond one person. A case in Thailand indicated the *probable* (not medically proven) transmission from daughter to mother (both died) and then to an aunt who survived.
- Because all influenza viruses have the ability to change, scientists are concerned that the H5N1 virus one day could be able to infect humans and spread easily from one person to another. Because these viruses do not commonly infect humans, there is little or no immune protection against them in the human population. If the H5N1 virus were able to infect people and spread easily from person to person, an influenza **pandemic** (worldwide outbreak of disease) could begin.
- Although there are indications that avian influenza can be transmitted between humans, so far it has not taken the feared mutated form that can fuel a pandemic. A disease that is restricted to a particular region is called **endemic**. An **epidemic** happens when the illness is identified in a larger number of persons than reasonably expected.

What is so special about the current outbreak?

- The current outbreak began in 2003. Never before have so many different countries been infected at the same time.
- So far, over 220 million birds have been destroyed, yet the infections continue to affect other flocks.

- It is documented that this virus strain can be passed from birds to humans.

How do humans catch bird flu?

- Infected birds shed the flu virus in their saliva, nasal secretions and feces.
- When the birds excrete the virus in their feces, it dries, is pulverized, and can then be inhaled.
- Direct contact with infected poultry or objects contaminated with their feces is the main source of human infection.
- Symptoms of bird flu in humans are the normal flu-like symptoms that include fever, cough, sore throat and muscle aches. In some cases, eye infections, pneumonia, severe respiratory diseases (such as acute respiratory distress), and death. The symptoms of bird flu may depend on which virus caused the infection.

How many people have been affected?

- As of January 15, 2007, there have been 161 confirmed human deaths from avian flu. All of these occurred in six countries, though four other countries have reported human cases. Cases of bird flu in poultry (not humans) have been reported in 61 countries (to include Asia, Africa, and Europe).
- H5N1 avian influenza has a high fatality rate.

Are there risks to handling, preparing and eating chicken, turkey or poultry products?

- It is safe to eat cooked chicken, turkey and other poultry products.
- The H5N1 virus is sensitive to heat. Cooking food above 158 degrees Fahrenheit (70 C) will inactivate the virus. Consumers need to be sure that all parts of the poultry are fully cooked (no “pink” parts) and that eggs, too, are properly cooked (no “runny” yolks). The 2005 FDA Food Code recommends cooking poultry to an internal temperature above 165 F (74 C) to destroy all bacterial contaminants.
- Consumers should also be aware of the risk of cross-contamination. During food preparation, juices from raw poultry and poultry products should never be allowed to touch or mix with items eaten raw. When handling raw poultry or raw poultry products, persons involved in food preparation should wash their hands thoroughly and clean and disinfect surfaces in contact with the poultry products. Soap and hot water are sufficient for this purpose.
- Eggs should also be thoroughly cooked.

What is currently being done to contain the virus?

- Regional quarantines are imposed on poultry farms.
- Millions of birds have been culled (destroyed) in an attempt to stop the spread of the disease among birds, which in turn stops it from being passed to humans.

What is the risk to people in the United States?

- The current risk is very low.
- The H5N1 strain is not been found in the United States, thus there is currently no known risk to the consumer who eats poultry or poultry products (to include eggs) purchased either in Europe or North America.

What is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)?

- Travelers going to affected countries in Asia with known outbreaks should avoid any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals.
- CDC recommendations for travelers to affected countries in Asia include: (1) Avoid contact with poultry whether it be live, well-appearing, sick, or dead. (2) Avoid contact with animals in live food markets. (3) Do not consume uncooked poultry or poultry products, including blood.

Web sites with AVI information:

World Health Organization

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/pandemic/en/index.html

U.S. Dept Health and Human Services <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/subjects/en/health/diseases-cards/special_avian.html

World Organization for Animal Health http://www.oie.int/eng/en_index.htm

OiE chart

<http://www.oie.int/downld/AVIAN%20INFLUENZA/graph%20HPAI%2004112005.pdf>

International Society for Infectious Disease

<http://www.promedmail.org/pls/promed/f?p=2400:1000>

American Veterinary Medical

Association http://www.avma.org/public_health/influenza/default.asp Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/>

USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot_issues/avian_influenza/avian_influenza.shtml

USDA Agricultural Research Station Univ. Georgia, Athens,

http://www.vet.uga.edu/vpp/gray_book/FAD/AVI.htm

FAQ references:

Pandemic Flu (2005) Avian Influenza (Bird Flu). Retrieved Nov. 9, 2005, from the Health and Human Service Web site: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/general/avian.html>

CDC (2005) Key Facts about Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) and Avian Influenza A (H5N1) Virus. Retrieved Nov. 9, 2005, from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/facts.htm>

WHO (2005) Avian Influenza frequently asked questions. Epidemic and Pandemic Alert Response. Retrieved Nov. 9, 2005, from the World Health Organizations Web site: http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/avian_faqs/en/index.html

CFSAN: Centers for Food Safety and Nutrition (2005) FDA 2005 Food Code Chapter 3. Retrieved Nov. 9, 2005, from the Food and Drug Administration Web site: <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~acrobat/fc05-3.pdf>

CDC (2005) Avian Flu Infections in Humans. Retrieved Nov. 9, 2005, from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/avian-flu-humans.htm>

ISID (2005) Promed-mail: Reuters Foundation AlertNet for Tuesday 8 Nov 2005. Retrieved Nov. 9, 2005, from the International Society for Infectious Disease ProMed organization Web site:

http://www.promedmail.org/pls/promed/f?p=2400:1001:9161472045584283872::%20NO::F2400_P1001_BACK_PAGE,F2400_P1001_PUB_MAIL_ID:1000,30999

FAO (2005) Animal Health Special Report. Avian Influenza FQAs. Retrieved Nov. 9, 2005, from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the World Health Organization Web site: http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/subjects/en/health/diseases-cards/avian_qa.html

This site is a joint project of the National Chicken Council (NCC), National Turkey Federation (NTF), and Egg Safety Center (ESC): <http://www.avianinfluenzainfo.com>.