

## **FAQ'S ABOUT AVIAN FLU vs. PANDEMIC INFLUENZA**

### **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AVIAN INFLUENZA AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA?**

- AVIAN INFLUENZA is commonly referred to as “Bird Flu” because it is almost exclusively a disease of birds. Birds experience flu seasons with varying strains of avian influenza. Currently the avian influenza strain of greatest concern is the H5N1 virus.
- PANDEMIC INFLUENZA is also called “Pandemic Flu”. Pandemic flu occurs when a strain of the influenza virus spreads from human-to-human at a global level, causing a global outbreak or *pandemic*.

### **WHY ARE EXPERTS CONCERNED ABOUT AVIAN AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA?**

- Currently the avian influenza H5N1 virus has mutated in a way that allows bird-to-human transmission. This mutation has caused 200 confirmed cases of bird flu in humans, and about 100 human deaths worldwide.
- There is potential for the avian H5N1 influenza virus to mutate in a way that will allow human-to-human transmission. If this mutation takes place a pandemic could follow - it has not done so to date.

### **WHAT IS AVIAN INFLUENZA or “Bird Flu?”-**

- Bird flu is an influenza strain that primarily affects birds. Wildlife and agricultural authorities prepare for the constantly mutating strains of avian influenza, just as public health authorities prepare for the constantly mutating strains of seasonal human influenza.
- Currently, experts are concerned with the avian influenza strain H5N1 virus. The H5N1 virus has not yet appeared in the United States. As many strains of influenza do, H5N1 mutates rapidly on an annual basis.
- Check out <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/#map> to view a map of the nations that have confirmed human cases of avian influenza.
- At this time, it is uncertain whether the currently circulating H5N1 virus will lead to a global disease outbreak in humans - a *pandemic*.
- The World Health Organization continues to track the H5N1 virus. Follow the World Health Organization Timeline to view the history of Avian Influenza H5N1 viral strain at: [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/Timeline\\_15.02.pdf](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/Timeline_15.02.pdf)

### **WHAT IS PANDEMIC INFLUENZA or “Pandemic Flu?”-**

- Pandemic influenza is a flu that causes a global outbreak, or *pandemic*.
- Pandemic influenza occurs when a mutation in the influenza strain spreads easily from human-to-human.
- The influenza virus has mutated into strains that have caused pandemics many times throughout history.
- The history of pandemic influenza is available online at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease: <http://www3.niaid.nih.gov/news/focuson/flu/illustrations/timeline/timeline.htm>

## **IS IT POSSIBLE TO CATCH AVIAN INFLUENZA or the “Bird Flu” FROM EATING POULTRY?**

- **NO** cases of humans catching bird flu from eating properly cooked domestic or wild birds have been confirmed.

## **WHY SHOULD THE PUBLIC BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL FOR A PANDEMIC INFLUENZA?**

- Should a pandemic occur the public will depend on public health systems to provide scientifically sound public health information quickly, openly and reliably. Understanding what a pandemic is, preparation plans at all levels, and what could happen during a pandemic helps us make informed decisions at the individual and social levels.
- Education and outreach are critical steps to preparing for a pandemic.

## **WHAT CAN INDIVIDUALS DO TO LIMIT THE SPREAD OF A PANDEMIC INFLUENZA?**

- To reduce the spread of infections when you feel sick: stay home from work, school, and shopping. Also, stay away from others who are ill.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow and wash your hands frequently. Further information is available at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>
- During an outbreak face masks may help. They act as a good reminder to avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands; and contain germs spread through coughing and sneezing.

## **WHAT CAN FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESSES DO TO BE PREPARED?**

- Start by collaborating and exchanging phone numbers with friends, neighbors, social and faith groups to make plans for supporting those who become ill. Include plans like shopping for those who are ill so they do not have to go to the store. Plan to check up on one another by phone, other than in person.
- Simple steps include keeping a supply of: bottled water, non-perishable food and medicines on hand.
- For more detailed information follow the “preparing for disaster” steps outlined by the American Red Cross at: [http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0.1082.0\\_601\\_00.html](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0.1082.0_601_00.html).
- Ask your employer about how business will continue during a pandemic. A Business Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist is available at [www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/businesschecklist.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/businesschecklist.html).

## **WHAT HAS THE GOVERNMENT DONE TO PREPARE?**

- Strategic plans are set up at the international, national, state and local (Lane County) levels to be prepared in the event of a pandemic.
- To view international level plans go to: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/pandemic/en/index.html>
- To view the national level plans go to: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/>.
- To view the Oregon state level plans go to: <http://egov.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/acd/flu/panflu.shtml>

**WHAT IS LANE COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DOING?**

- Lane County Public Health's pandemic illness plan is comprehensive, active and ongoing.
- The pandemic influenza emergency operations plan (appendix F) is available online at: [http://www.co.lane.or.us/HHS\\_pubHlth/documents/PandemicIllnesschart.pdf](http://www.co.lane.or.us/HHS_pubHlth/documents/PandemicIllnesschart.pdf)

**ARE FLU SHOTS OR VACCINES AVAILABLE FOR PANDEMIC FLU?**

- The global plan is to spot the onset of the outbreak early, isolate the virus, and begin manufacturing vaccine.
- Flu vaccines take six months or more to manufacture, so an effective vaccine will most likely not be available in the early months of a pandemic
- The national flu plan does provide for flu vaccine development and stockpiling, but it does not provide for the distribution and delivery of the vaccine. If vaccine is available, Lane County Public Health will get it delivered.
- Stockpiling antivirals, such as Tamiflu and Relenza is not a good idea. Supplies are best reserved for people at risk of complications from annual influenza.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

- Government Plans for Pandemic Influenza "Pandemic Flu"  
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/general/whatis.html>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Avian Influenza "Bird Flu"  
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm>