

## Preventing Avian Influenza

### INTRODUCTION

Avian influenza is a viral disease that can cause sickness and death among poultry. On rare occasions, avian influenza virus can be transmitted to poultry workers or others who come in contact with infected poultry or contact contaminated surfaces. Examples of such workers who could be at risk include poultry growers and their employees; service technicians of poultry processing companies; caretakers, layer barn workers, and chick movers at egg production facilities; and workers involved in disease control and eradication activities, including state, federal, contract, and company employees.

Avian influenza is a disease caused by infection of poultry with type A influenza viruses. Low-pathogenic strains typically cause few or no signs in infected birds. When signs are seen, they may include respiratory problems, diarrhea, a decline in egg production, or an increase in mortality. However, under field conditions, some low-pathogenic strains can mutate and become highly pathogenic, leading to the deaths of entire flocks. Highly pathogenic avian influenza is extremely contagious and a fatal form of the disease for poultry.

Although avian influenza A viruses rarely infect humans, since 1997, instances of human infection have occurred; some (outside the United States) have resulted in death. The virus is excreted in the droppings of infected birds and in their respiratory secretions. Transmission to humans is thought to have resulted from contact with infected sick or dead poultry or their droppings, or contact with contaminated litter or surfaces (e.g., egg flats). The suspected routes of entry of the virus to humans are the mouth, nose, eyes, and lungs. Although the human health risk of low-pathogenic avian influenza viruses is not well established, protective measures should be taken by persons likely to have prolonged direct or indirect exposure to any avian influenza virus in an enclosed setting.

### EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Employer:

- Follow biosecurity practices to prevent spread of disease between farms and to employees
- Train supervisors to know the signs indicating birds are infected with avian influenza viruses
- Train supervisors to know the signs and symptoms of human infection with avian influenza viruses
- Provide antiviral medication and current season's influenza vaccine if appropriate
- Provide appropriate personal protective equipment
- Provide appropriate hygiene facilities

#### Employee:

- Wash hands frequently if in close contact with the infected animals, contaminated surfaces, or after removing gloves.

- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including protective clothing and gloves and foot coverings that can be disinfected or disposed, respirators and goggles.
- Take antiviral medication and get the current season's influenza vaccine if appropriate
- Monitor health for the development of fever, respiratory symptoms, and/or conjunctivitis
- Seek medical care if ill and, prior to arrival, notify health care provider that they may have been exposed to avian influenza.

## WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

### US Department of Agriculture

- Biosecurity Tips: 6 Ways To Prevent Poultry Disease [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal\\_health/content/printable\\_version/poster\\_ahbiosec.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/content/printable_version/poster_ahbiosec.pdf)
- 2004 USDA Factsheet [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/pubs/fsheet\\_faq\\_notice/faq\\_ahhpai.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/pubs/fsheet_faq_notice/faq_ahhpai.pdf)

### California Department of Food and Agriculture

- Avian Health Program [http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/avian\\_health\\_program.htm](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/avian_health_program.htm)

### US Poultry and Egg Association

- <http://www.poultryegg.org/>

### Centers for Disease Control

- Interim Guidance for Protection of Persons Involved in U.S. Avian Influenza Outbreak Disease Control and Eradication Activities <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/professional/protect-guid.htm>
- Update on Avian Influenza A (H5N1) <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/professional/han081304.htm>

### World Health Organization

- Avian Influenza - Factsheet [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/)

### Occupational Safety and Health Administration

- Avian Influenza Protecting Poultry Workers at Risk <http://www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib121304.html>
- Guidance For Protecting Workers Against Avian Flu <http://www.osha.gov/dsg/guidance/avian-flu.html>

Zenith provides workplace safety resources at: **TheZenith.com**<sup>®</sup>