

# Avian Influenza and Pandemic Planning

Update 5  
27 February 2006

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This issue includes the latest on the international situation and the spread of H5N1 to Africa and India. There are details about clinical pathways planning and also information on the public pandemic advertising campaign, which begins in mid March.

## International situation

As at 27 February 2006 there have been 170 confirmed cases of H5N1 in humans, with 92 deaths, since 26 December 2003. Avian influenza of type H5N1 has spread further into Europe, the Indian sub-continent and Africa, with 13 countries confirming outbreaks since the beginning of February 2006. There is speculation about widespread outbreaks in birds in several African countries. Human cases have been confirmed for the first time in Turkey and Iraq. There are rumours of possible human cases in Iran, India and Nigeria, although two initial suspected cases in Nigeria have proven to be negative. These rumours will be of ongoing concern and the World Health Organization (WHO) has deployed several outbreak investigation and response teams. The arrival of the H5N1 virus in India and Africa has always been viewed as giving rise to grave concern because of the lack of both animal and human health infrastructure and the enormous burden of human disease already existing in those parts of the world.

The cumulative number of confirmed human cases reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) since December 2003 can be found at:

[http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/country/cases\\_table\\_2006\\_02\\_20/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/cases_table_2006_02_20/en/index.html)

A global update can be found at [www.oie.int/download/AVIAN\\_INFLUENZA/A\\_AI-Asia.htm](http://www.oie.int/download/AVIAN_INFLUENZA/A_AI-Asia.htm)

## New Zealand situation

The Minister of Health, the Hon Pete Hodgson, attended the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Integrated Emergency Management Conference in Wellington on 14 February 2006. Mr Hodgson told the conference that while pandemic planning will be ongoing, a substantial framework to manage a pandemic should be completed in the coming months. He said, "We are in the middle of a very busy pandemic planning process, Government agencies, businesses and local bodies will be working hard over the next few months to make sure we're as ready as we can be if a flu pandemic reaches New Zealand. "Tremendous progress has already been made and the vast majority of our work should be completed by mid-year. The planning process is ongoing, but we are very close to finalising the key elements of New Zealand's response".

## World Health Organisation Regional Committee Meeting

New Zealand is to host the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Committee Meeting in September 2006. The meeting of 37 Western Pacific member states will be the first to be held in New Zealand since 1973. The WHO's Regional Director, Dr Shigeru Omi visited New Zealand on 27 February 2006 to sign a hosting agreement with the Director General of Health, Dr Karen Poutasi. During his visit, Dr Omi gave a strategic presentation on the Western Pacific Regional Office's role and pandemic planning. He said New Zealand seemed well-advanced in its planning for a potential pandemic, and belonged to one of the best categories.

## Advisory Groups

The Interagency Pandemic Group (IPG) met on 9 February 2006, in Wellington.

## Clinical Pathways Planning

The clinical pathways advisory group, met on 22 February 2006, in Wellington. The group includes Ministry representatives, emergency medicine, intensive care, and infectious diseases specialists, as well as

general practitioners, and nurses. The aim of the meeting was to finalise the group's guidance around the pathways for care for people with suspected or confirmed cases of pandemic influenza. The guidance will cover the continuum of care from self-care, to the use of community-based assessment centres (CBACs), secondary care and intensive care in the event of an influenza pandemic. It is anticipated that the clinical pathways guidance will be used by both clinical and non-clinical people who may be required to assist in providing triage for and advice to people with suspected pandemic influenza.

### **District Health Boards**

Ministry officials attended Northern and Midland DHBs' regional meeting on 19 January 2006 in Auckland. The Northern and Midland DHBs presented highlights from their DHB pandemic plans.

Ministry officials also attended a meeting on 26 January 2006 in Christchurch with all South Island DHBs. Southern DHBs discussed issues surrounding regional as opposed to local planning and pandemic response. Both groups included representation from both secondary and primary health sectors.

The Ministry's communications team held a teleconference on 21 February 2006 with DHB communications to discuss pandemic planning issues. This is the first of regular fortnightly updates.

### **Health and Disability Sector Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) Working Group**

A Ministry representative spoke at the NGOs Working Group in Wellington on 2 February 2006 and provided an update to the NGOs on the Ministry's pandemic planning.

### **Meeting of Pandemic Influenza Surveillance Working Group**

The Pandemic Influenza Surveillance Working Group met on 2 February 2006 in Wellington. The group's focus included prioritising potential surveillance information sources and systems, policy issues, and potential practical implementation issues. The working group includes ESR, Medical Officers of Health, and representatives from primary care and accident and medical clinics.

### **0800 AVN FLU (0800 286 358)**

From the end of October 2005, when the 0800 number became operational, until 22 February 2006, a total of 1086 calls were logged. The freephone, pre-recorded line gives callers four options for further information. They are: Preparing for a Pandemic, Protecting Yourself in a Pandemic, Tamiflu and Travel Advice.

## **Ministry of Health workstream updates**

### **Advertising update**

The wider pandemic public advertising campaign will begin mid-March 2006. A mail drop to every household will commence on 20 March 2006 and will take a week to be completed. The mail drop includes a brochure on 'Getting Ready for a Flu Pandemic' and a magnet with details on where people can go for further information. TV commercials will be broadcast on TVNZ and TV3 starting 15 March 2006 for a month. Specific Family Health Diary advertisements will begin on 19 March 2006 and will also run for a month. Details are also being finalised for commercials on Maori TV and radio advertising on iwi radio and Pacific Island stations.

### **Omnibus Survey**

The results of the first phone survey of almost 1000 New Zealanders were released on 3 February 2006. The survey, commissioned by the Ministry of Health included a series of questions on public awareness and the level of preparedness for a pandemic. Three out of five New Zealanders think New Zealand is taking the threat of an influenza pandemic 'seriously enough' while nearly two-thirds have seen information on how to prepare for a pandemic. The data also shows that while public awareness is high, most New Zealanders have not taken steps to prepare themselves for a pandemic. Around 32 per cent of those surveyed have made preparations, with the majority of prepared households having stocked an emergency supply kit. The survey will be repeated in March and May.