

# Avian Influenza and Pandemic Planning

Update 6  
27 March 2006

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This issue includes an update on the international situation, the latest on Version 15 of the New Zealand Influenza Pandemic Action Plan and details of an editorial briefing to discuss reporting during a flu pandemic.

## International situation

As of 27 March 2006 a total of 186 human cases of H5N1 infection have been reported and confirmed by the World Health Organization (WHO). 105 of these cases have been fatal. WHO tested 11 suspected cases in Azerbaijan and have confirmed 7 of these are H5N1. Five of the cases were fatal. Two additional people have been hospitalised with symptoms of bilateral pneumonia. Testing of these two suspected cases is currently underway. On 20 March 2006, WHO advised that the Ministry of Health in Egypt confirmed their first case of human infection from H5N1. Samples are being sent for diagnostic verification and further analysis by a WHO collaborating laboratory.

Afghanistan has reported 13 outbreaks of H5N1 in poultry. Sweden confirmed on 15 March 2006 their first case of H5N1 in wild birds. Israel confirmed on 17 March that H5N1 had been found in turkeys.

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\\_03\\_24/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/cases_table_2006_03_24/en/index.html)

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

## New Zealand situation

Version 15 of the New Zealand Influenza Pandemic Action Plan (NZIPAP) is being developed and will be with the Health Minister at the end of March 2006. It will be available to the public in the first week of April 2006.

50 people representing New Zealand's border agencies took part in the border management exercise, "Bee Gee" on 23 February 2006. The exercise focused on the types of information needed during a pandemic situation. A debrief indicated that the workgroup achieved its objectives, and a similar format will be used for future exercises.

## Meeting with Turkish Minister of Agriculture

On 8 March 2006 Ministry of Health officials attended a meeting organised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and hosted by Hon Jim Anderton, Minister of Agriculture. At this meeting, the Turkish Minister of Agriculture briefed the assembled group about the ongoing outbreaks of avian influenza in Turkey, which began in October 2005.

## Advisory Groups

### Pandemic Influenza Reference Committee (PIRC)

A second PIRC meeting was held in Wellington on 28 February. Various groups presented updates on the status of their planning, and there were also presentations about community based assessment clinics, clinical pathways, non-governmental organisations' involvement in pandemic planning, and DHBs' planning.

### Interagency Pandemic Group (IPG)

Interagency Pandemic Group's fortnightly meeting was held on 2 March 2006 in Wellington. Items on the agenda for discussion included:

- Update Ministry of Health issues

- Update DHB planning
- Exercise BeeGee
- Communications Update
- Version 15, Influenza Pandemic Action Plan

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

From the end of October 2005, when the 0800 number became operational, until 27 March 2006, a total of 1852 were logged. From the 15 March, when the TV and radio advertising campaign began, to 27 March 2006, 699 calls were logged.

The freephone, pre-recorded line gives callers four options for further information which include – preparing for a pandemic, protecting yourself in a pandemic, Tamiflu and travel advice.

## **Ministry of Health workstream updates**

### **Communications**

#### **Translations**

The flu pandemic brochure and poster are being translated into eight languages - Māori, Cook Islands Māori, Samoan, Tongan, Traditional Chinese, Korean, Hindi and Arabic. They will be available on the Ministry's website at the end of April.

#### **Chinese Newspaper**

Two adverts and a half page editorial on flu pandemic will go into the New Zealand Chinese Times in March and April. The information will be in traditional Chinese, which is understood by Cantonese and Mandarin speakers and some people from other South East Asian countries.

#### **Teletext**

Teletext has been added to the flu pandemic adverts on TVNZ and TV3 to help the hearing impaired and for people who do not speak English as their first language.

#### **Editorial Briefing**

An editorial briefing was held on 8 March 2006 with editors from print and broadcast media to help formulate a plan around reporting during a pandemic situation. The session provided constructive input on how to communicate with media during a pandemic. There was general support for the Ministry developing a plan for disseminating information to the media without exposing staff from the media or the Ministry to additional risk - from public gatherings such as traditional media conferences. The nominated organisation from the media which was to progress this plan is the Commonwealth Press Union Freedom Committee. Other issues discussed immediacy of information to the media (prompt information from the Ministry before and during a pandemic); the ability to contact media organisations outside normal business hours; timing of media conferences during a pandemic (more than once a day at its peak); regional input and demand for spokespeople outside of media conferences.

#### **Family Health Diary Magazine**

Information on how to prepare for an influenza pandemic was included in the Family Health Diary Magazine, which was distributed in March. Two hundred thousand copies were inserted in the 19 March 2006 editions of the New Zealand Listener, and in the New Zealand Women's Weekly. One hundred thousand copies went to general practitioners' surgeries and pharmacies on 10 March.

#### **Omnibus Survey**

The second survey on public awareness and level of preparedness for a flu pandemic is to be carried out between 23 March and 29 March 2006.

#### **International co-ordination**

In March, Ministry officials attended the International Conference in Emerging Infectious Diseases, the International Symposium in Emerging Zoonoses and the APEC Health Taskforce in Vietnam