

Avian Influenza and Pandemic Planning

Update 7
27 April 2006

This issue includes information on the pandemic preparedness legislation, details about the pandemic workshop for DHB planners, and Civil Defence and Emergency Management groups and the psychosocial recovery planning project.

International situation

As of the 27 April 2006, the confirmed number of human cases with the H5N1 avian influenza virus stands at 205. One hundred and thirteen of these cases have been fatal. On 19 April the Ministry of Health in Indonesia confirmed the country's 32nd case. On 21 April, the Ministry of Health in Egypt informed the World Health Organization (WHO) of their fourth death from H5N1 avian influenza. The Ministry of Health in China also informed WHO of their 12th death, was a previously reported case.

In animals, Cambodia reported a further outbreak of H5N1 in backyard chickens and ducks and free-range ducks in two villages. Reports of first outbreaks were received by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) from the Palestinian Autonomous Territories (5 April) and Sudan (19 April). In both countries the outbreaks were in farm birds.

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_04_27/en/index.html

A global update can be found at www.oie.int/download/AVIAN_INFLUENZA/A_AI-Asia.htm

New Zealand situation

Pandemic Preparedness legislation introduced

The Law Reform (Epidemic Preparedness) Bill was introduced to Parliament on 6 April. The main issues involve amendments to the Health Act 1956 which mostly cover the need to update and clarify quarantine powers. There are also amendments to non-health legislation, including changes to the Social Security Act 1964 and Holidays Act 2003.

Health Minister Pete Hodgson said, "The Government has a responsibility to New Zealand families to do all we can to prepare for a possible flu pandemic. If a pandemic reaches New Zealand, we will have to be ready to deal with some of the most serious social and economic challenges we've faced in over a generation. The legislation will strengthen the Government's ability to respond to a pandemic. While its provisions will only be used in a major emergency, it clarifies a number of important issues for businesses, government agencies and the wider community."

Geoffrey Rice, historian and author of *Black November: the 1918 influenza pandemic in New Zealand*, gave a presentation to the Ministry of Health, the Interagency Pandemic Group and the Pandemic Influenza Reference Committee in Wellington on 20 April. Mr Rice provided an insight into the government and community preparedness and response to the 1918 influenza pandemic.

New Zealand Police held a workshop on 27 March involving law and order and emergency services. It looked at strategic and operational issues, covering roles and responsibilities and communications.

On 11 April, Steve Brazier, National Co-ordinator, Pandemic Planning, presented at the Non Government Organisation (NGO) Forum in Auckland.

District Health Boards

Pandemic workshop for DHB Planners and Civil Defence and Emergency Management groups

The Ministry is organising a national workshop for DHB emergency planners and Civil Defence Emergency groups for mid-May. The objectives of the workshop are:

- to achieve a clear and common understanding on how to move forward on implementing the New Zealand Influenza Pandemic Action Plan
- to achieve a clear understanding around the use of legislation, namely the:
 - Health Act 1956
 - Law Reform (Epidemic Preparedness) Bill
 - Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002
- To share regional experiences, in particular relationships and arrangements.

Regional DHB planning project

A meeting was held on 19 April in Wellington with the four regional DHB representatives involved in the Ministry of Health-led project to ensure national consistency in regional pandemic planning. Issues discussed included the specifics of the regions' individual projects, where there are opportunities for across-region collaboration, and any gaps and challenges. Two further face-to-face meetings of the group are scheduled for May and June (dates to be confirmed).

Ministry of Health workstream updates

Pandemic Intelligence workstream

Border management

The Ministry has developed a resource to provide incoming passengers with information about pandemic influenza and who they should contact if they are concerned. This would be held and only used as needed by public health units. The resource has been pre-tested and is being amended in light of the pre-test comments. The Ministry is also having the passenger locator form translated into a different languages.

Health and Disability Capability workstream

Infection Prevention and Control during an Influenza Pandemic

The Ministry has recently finalised guidance to the health and disability sector, other government agencies and the general public on actions and equipment to help protect themselves and others during an influenza pandemic. This can be found on the website: www.moh.govt.nz/pandemicinfluenza

Psychosocial recovery planning project

Two people have been recruited to work on the psychosocial recovery planning project. The second meeting of the advisory group for this project took place on 15 March.

Info-communications workstream

The Ministry met with Television New Zealand in April to discuss its 'lifeline utility' role in the event of a pandemic. A media protocol is being developed by the Ministry, in conjunction with media representatives, for reporting during a pandemic.

A national stock take of resources is being undertaken with District Health Boards to identify gaps in information and ensure consistency of messages between nationally and regionally developed resources.

The parenting magazine *Littlies* is doing a two-part series on how to prepare for an emergency, including a flu pandemic. The first part was out at the end of April and the second part, which includes information on preparing for a pandemic, is due out at the end of May.

The Director of Public Health, Dr Mark Jacobs has been interviewed for a seven-part documentary series called the *Truth Files* to be screened on TV2 later this year. Dr Jacobs will appear in one of the episodes about flu pandemic.