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AI FACT SHEET

Important information about AVIAN INFLUENZA

AVIAN INFLUENZA (AI) FACTS

- 1) First and foremost, the H5N1 virus causing problems in Asia, Europe, and Africa has not been detected anywhere in North, Central or South America at this time.
- 2) Properly cooked poultry meat is safe to eat in any case as cooking destroys the virus. It is recommended that poultry meat should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 180 degrees Fahrenheit throughout each piece.
- 3) A National Surveillance Program is being done in the USA. All poultry flocks are tested for Influenza before processing. Again, H5N1 has never been detected in US poultry.
- 4) Biosecurity measures in commercial poultry operations throughout the US are at maximum levels.
- 5) Biosecurity measures, surveillance efforts, and veterinary practices in place in the commercial poultry industry;
 - a) greatly reduce the possibility that disease will enter into commercial poultry flocks
 - b) would quickly detect presence of this disease
 - c) would result in immediate quarantine and depopulation of a poultry farm where H5N1 was detected and stringent containment, cleaning and disinfection measures would occur.
- 6) It is possible that migrating birds may spread the virus out from Asia this summer or fall. Surveillance testing is continuing and H5N1 was not detected in thousands of samples collected in Africa this past winter. Surveillance efforts of migratory birds in the USA to date have also not detected this virus.
- 7) All deaths from H5N1 virus in foreign countries to date have been attributed to prolonged or direct contact with infected poultry or due to backyard or market processing practices that are not used in the commercial poultry industry in the U.S. Only one case of "possible" human to human spread is known, but there has been no sustained human to human transmission.
- 8) The primary concern about the H5N1 virus that has been reported in the news is the possibility of mutation that would enable readily and sustainable transmission from person to person. This mutation has not been detected in the virus to date. Furthermore, even if such a mutation were to occur, it does not mean that a pandemic is imminent.
- 9) Since the first recorded death from H5N1 avian influenza virus strain in humans in 1997, there have been about 205 confirmed known human infections with 115 confirmed deaths throughout the world.
- 10) While these deaths are tragic, it should be recognized that there are 32,000-35,000 deaths each year in the U.S. alone from human influenza virus.
- 11) Basic hygiene is recommended by health experts to prevent contracting influenza (practices such as covering your mouth when sneezing or coughing and then washing your hands afterwards).
- 12) Considerable research is being conducted throughout the world on new vaccine development and other technologies that will help in preventing and/or slowing the spread of H5N1. It is believed these new vaccines and technologies will lessen the possibility of an H5N1 pandemic.