



There have been numerous developments in the planning for a possible avian influenza outbreak and/or a human influenza pandemic in the United States since our first Avian Influenza Bulletin in March. The purpose of today's bulletin is to summarize some of those developments and as well as give everyone some indication of Forest Service actions and things to come.

Employee and Public Awareness Effort

The potential for the avian influenza to mutate and become a human influenza pandemic continues to receive a lot of media coverage and is of concern to everyone. The White House and all of the Federal Government are working diligently to prepare and plan for this contingency. A critical part of that effort includes publishing communication products on websites to support government, state and individual and community planning efforts. Key websites include:

General Information

<http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fam/avian.html>
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov>
<http://www.avianflu.gov/>
<http://www.usda.gov/birdflu>

Information for Field Biologists and Hunters on Safely Handling Wild Birds

http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/wildlife_health_bulletins/

Employees and their families are encouraged to periodically monitor these sites for updated information. Field units should go to these websites for the most timely, consistent and accurate information for use in local planning and employee education.

Federal Planning and Response Guidelines

Interagency guidance and direction for preparedness and response planning for an avian influenza and/or a human influenza pandemic comes from several sources:

The National Response Plan, produced by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, establishes a comprehen-

sive approach to managing large-scale domestic emergencies in the United States. The plan incorporates best practices and procedures from incident management disciplines, including homeland security, emergency management, law enforcement, firefighting, public works, public health, responder and recovery worker health and safety, and emergency medical services. These disciplines are integrated into a unified structure. Through a series of emergency support functions (ESFs) the plan lays the groundwork for coordinating the Federal government with State, local and Tribal governments and the private sector during domestic emergency incidents. ESF 4 assigns primary responsibility for wildland firefighting to the Forest Service. The plan also assigns a supporting role for other ESFs to the Forest Service. For example, the agency was called on for logistics and other support at Ground Zero and the Pentagon after 9/11. Appropriate ESF references from the National Response Plan are made in Federal planning documents for responding to an avian influenza outbreak as well as a human influenza pandemic. The National Response Plan can be found at (<http://www.pandemicflu.gov>) under the Federal Planning tab.

The *National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza* was issued by the President on November 1, 2005. It charges the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services with leading the Federal pandemic preparedness and assigns responsibilities to individuals, industry, and government agencies (local, State and Federal) for preparing and responding to a pandemic. Its intent is to stop or slow the pandemic or limit its spread in the United States; mitigate disease, suffering, and death; and sustain infrastructure while mitigating the impact of a pandemic on the economy and the functioning of society. The strategy can also be found under the Federal Planning tab at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

The *Implementation Plan for the National Strategy*, released by the President on May 3, 2006, translates the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza into 300 specific actions for Federal departments and agencies and sets clear expectations for State and local governments and other non-Federal entities. The plan addresses the critical steps that must be taken immediately to address the threat of a human pandemic as well as threats to wild and domestic birds and other animals from the avian influenza. For example, in the event of an avian influenza outbreak the plan calls for at

least one incident management team (IMT) from USDA to be onsite within 24 hours of the detection of an outbreak in domestic birds or other domestic animals caused by a virus that has the potential to become a human pandemic strain. Under the plan, USDA also has responsibility for safely culling the affected poultry or other animals and disposing of the carcasses, which could require support from the Forest Service and others in the wildland fire community as it has in the past. In 2003 following an outbreak of Newcastle disease in domestic birds, two type I IMTs were assigned as well as numerous other Forest Service personnel to help the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) fight the disease in Arizona, California, Nevada and Texas. In 2002, a type I IMT and other personnel went to southern Virginia to help APHIS manage a low-pathogenic avian influenza outbreak in domestic turkey flocks. In the Virginia incident, the IMT and other wildland fire personnel played a key role in transporting and disposing of approximately 4.7 million birds. The implementation plan also describes USDA's establishment of a national veterinary stockpile (NVS) for rapid distribution of necessary supplies in the event of a bird or animal disease outbreak. The NVS contains materials for responding to an influenza outbreak based on the risk known to be associated with the various levels and types of exposures to a high-pathogenic avian influenza. Stockpiled materials include personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfectant, diagnostic reagents, and antiviral medication for responders. Materials are collected into "Strike Packs", each with 10 days worth of responder support supplies for 10 responders to be dispatched to an avian influenza incident within 24 hours. The implementation plan can be found on at <http://www.pandemic.flu.gov> under the Federal Planning tab.

A draft *USDA Human Pandemic Planning Guidance for Employee Health, Safety, and Continuity of Operations* was also published on May 3, 2006. This plan specifically details USDA support for the National Strategy and the Implementation Plan. The USDA plan provides guidance and checklists on USDA's primary concerns of providing for employee safety and health and continuing essential USDA functions and services during an outbreak of influenza. The plan identifies the Forest Service as a USDA support agency for 11 ESFs ranging from ESF 1 (transportation) to ESF 13 (public safety and security). Also included is ESF 8 (public health and medical service). The draft plan can be found at <http://www.usda.gov/oo/beprepared>

USDA has also recently posted a draft *Summary of the National Avian Influenza Response Plan*. It summarizes the 1,100 page National Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Response Plan an "operations guide" that complements regional, State, and industry plans for an avian influenza outbreak and response. Roles and responsibilities are detailed in the plan, as are specific step-by-step operational

guidelines to be used in an avian influenza response including a communications plan. The summary can be found on the APHIS website at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov> (click on the avian influenza icon).

Forest Service Actions

The Forest Service is working closely with other Federal agencies on preparedness planning in the event of an avian influenza and/or human influenza outbreak. Periodic updates of information and plans will be provided by these Avian Influenza Bulletins and posted with links on the Forest Service intranet site <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fam/avian.html>

We have also established an **Associate Deputy Chief Oversight Group** to monitor the avian influenza situation and interagency guidance. The group of Associate Deputy Chiefs from all Deputy Areas will monitor interagency guidance and actions as well as Forest Service plans and actions and responses to assignments from USDA. Robin Thompson, Associate Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry is leading this effort.

The first edition of the Forest Service *Influenza Workforce Protection Plan* was distributed on March 23, 2006. The plan provides guidance on Forest Service continuity of operations, outlines protections for employees in the workplace and gives information and sources of materials to help employees and their families learn about the potential for an avian influenza outbreak and possible subsequent human influenza pandemic. Designed to help the agency develop preparedness measures and actions, the plan also calls for the development of local unit plans that, at a minimum, address the key points in the Washington Office plan. The unit plans are to be completed by June 1. Workforce protection plans might need to be modified, as appropriate, based upon a review of the Implementation Plan for the National Strategy and USDA's Human Pandemic Planning Guidance. Avian Influenza Bulletins will continue to provide a consistent, identifiable communication tool.

Recommendations from the task group working on the *Interagency Influenza Readiness and Response Plan* were presented to the Forest Service National Leadership Team (NLT) in April. The NLT approved the direction the task group is taking. Scheduled for completion in June, the plan will be aligned with the Implementation Plan for the National Strategy and USDA's National Avian Influenza Response Plan.

What Can You Do?

It is important to remember that avian influenza has not been detected in the United States and that avian influenza elsewhere in the world is not readily transmitted from human to human. The mutation necessary to create a human influenza pandemic has not yet occurred.

The websites listed above provide information on what you can do to prepare in case of a human influenza pandemic. Individual action is possibly the most important element of pandemic preparedness and response. In general, these websites recommend the following:

- Practice good public health measures such as frequent hand washing, staying home when sick, covering nose and mouth when sneezing, and using facial tissues.
- Keep a supply of food and medicine on hand in case you have to stay home because you are sick or taking care of sick family members.
- Take precautions to prevent the spread of infection if a family member has symptoms of influenza.
- Follow public guidance provided on websites, limiting attendance at public gatherings and avoiding nonessential travel.

Other Related News

ABC Television Movie “Fatal Contact: Bird Flu in America.” You might have seen this made for TV movie. Aired on Tuesday, May 9, it follows a hypothetical outbreak of the H5N1 avian influenza virus from a Hong Kong market through mutation into a pandemic virus that spreads from human to human around the world. Though a fictional dramatization (there is no influenza pandemic in the world at this time and the avian influenza has not reached the United States), the movie correctly highlighted the importance of individual and community planning to sustain communities and neighborhoods during an outbreak of influenza. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has developed a set of planning documents, including checklists for schools, businesses, health care providers, and community and State organizations as well as a “Checklist for Individuals and Families” and an “Individual and Family Planning Guide” posted at: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

Migratory Birds Return to Europe Without Avian Influenza. According to a story in the *New York Times* on May 11, flocks of migratory birds that flew south to Africa last fall have returned to Europe without carrying the avian influenza virus. International health officials had

feared that the virus was likely to spread to Africa during the southward migration and return to Europe, widening the outbreak of avian influenza in domestic poultry. Despite thousands of samples collected in Africa over the winter the avian influenza virus H5N1 was not detected in a single wild bird and only a few cases have been detected in wild birds in Europe since April 1, at the height of the migration north. Also, cases in Europe have fallen off steeply since February when dozens of new cases were being found daily. Wild bird specialists have concluded that the northward spring migration was not a factor in spreading the disease, a welcome development because the disease can be easier controlled if confined to domestic poultry. Nevertheless, public health officials caution that the threat remains and that preparedness precautions should continue. Even if the current strain burns out, public health experts predict a virus will, at some point in the future, result in a human pandemic. Personal and organizational preparedness planning should therefore continue.

Reporting Sick or Dead Birds. Scientists believe that the avian influenza virus H5N1 would most likely be introduced into the United States, if at all, through Alaska where Asian and North American birds routinely mix. USDA has been working with other Federal agencies, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and the State of Alaska to strategically sample birds and their environments in the Pacific Flyway. Morbidity/mortality in wild birds is also being investigated. Such studies offer the best hope for early detection if the virus is introduced into the United States. In addition to avian influenza, birds get sick or die for various reasons including trauma, predation, avian botulism and avian cholera. If large numbers of birds are affected, Federal and State agencies routinely investigate. If sick or dead birds in large numbers are on national forest land or reported by the public, please contact USDA APHIS Wildlife Services at 1-866-4-USDA-WS. The AHPIS website also has a map of the United States with links to State wildlife offices for the reporting of sick or dead birds at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot_issues.