



AVIAN INFLUENZA

International Partnership To Meet A Global Threat

“If left unchallenged, this virus could become the first pandemic of the 21st century. We must not allow that to happen...”

– President George W. Bush

The U.S. Government is concerned that the ongoing outbreaks of avian influenza in birds have the potential to turn into a human influenza pandemic that would have significant global health, economic, and social consequences. It has allocated \$3.8 billion in emergency funding to address the threat of avian and pandemic influenza domestically and internationally.

WORLDWIDE PROBLEM

To date, outbreaks of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza have been confirmed among birds in nearly 50 countries. The World Health Organization reports around 200 human cases and over 100 deaths. Avian influenza has occasionally spread from bird to human, but there is no evidence of sustained human-to-human transmission at this time. An effective vaccine for humans has not yet been approved.

THE U.S. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

On November 1, 2005, President Bush unveiled his National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza, a plan to strengthen the Government’s ability to safeguard the American people in the event of a global pandemic. The President’s strategy is designed to detect outbreaks worldwide, stockpile drugs, improve the capacity to produce new vaccines, and prepare to respond. The Implementation Plan for the National Strategy identifies coordinated federal preparedness and response actions.

The Department of State was assigned the lead role for coordinating the U.S. Government’s international efforts. In March 2006, the Department established the Avian Influenza Action Group, which – in close collaboration with the Departments of Health and Human Services,

Agriculture, Homeland Security, Defense, the U.S. Agency for International Development and other agencies – leads the Department’s international engagement on avian and pandemic influenza.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

President Bush announced the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza during the UN General Assembly in September 2005. Its goals are to:

- Elevate the avian influenza issue on national agendas;
- Coordinate efforts among donor and affected nations;
- Mobilize and leverage resources;
- Increase transparency in disease reporting and the quality of surveillance; and
- Build local capacity to identify, contain and respond to an influenza pandemic.

The first meeting of the Partnership took place October 6-7 in Washington, DC. Top officials from 88 countries and eight international organizations committed themselves to work together to combat avian and pandemic influenza.

Topic areas included: surveillance and prevention; preparedness, planning and outreach; and response and containment of avian influenza.

ASSISTANCE FOR AFFECTED COUNTRIES

At an international donors’ conference in Beijing in January, the global community pledged \$1.9 billion to combat avian influenza worldwide. The United States pledged \$334 million for overseas programs to help fund develop national plans, diagnostics and lab capacity, stockpiles of protective equipment, communication and other needs.