

USDA'S ROLE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

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On November 1, 2005, President Bush announced the *National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza*, a comprehensive approach to addressing the threat of pandemic influenza. The *Strategy* outlines how the U.S. government is preparing for, and how it will detect and respond to a potential pandemic. It provides clear and concise principles and objectives for pandemic preparedness. On May 3, 2006, the Homeland Security Council released the *Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza*, which integrates planning across all levels of government to ensure that planning and response actions are complimentary, compatible and coordinated. The Plan directs federal agencies to carry out 324 critical actions within prescribed amounts of time. The Plan ensures that the federal government, along with our state and local partners, continues to take appropriate steps in preparation for highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) and a possible human influenza pandemic in the country. The Plan is available at www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/pandemicflu/.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) works together with federal, state and industry partners to protect the U.S. against the rapid spread of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza. Safeguards include trade restrictions, wild bird monitoring, federal-state-industry testing of poultry, federal inspection programs at slaughter and processing plants and rapid response plans. The Implementation Plan directs USDA to play either a leadership or coordinating role in 98 critical actions as the lead agency on avian influenza in poultry. This includes initiatives such as continuing to support the coordinated efforts overseas to slow the spread of the disease in poultry; expanding USDA's domestic testing and early warning systems; and ensuring USDA has a strong plan in place to rapidly and decisively respond to a detection of highly pathogenic H5N1 in U.S. poultry, in coordination with states and industry.

Examples of USDA Critical Actions

- Training veterinary laboratory diagnosticians from around the world. Multiple sessions of two-dozen students each are being conducted at the USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa. Training sessions cover the differential diagnoses for avian influenza and how to use various diagnostic tests to detect highly pathogenic avian influenza.

- Providing expertise and funding to assist the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) with a new Crisis Management Center, to improve response to avian influenza outbreaks worldwide. USDA training has been provided on "incident command system" structures, and deployment procedures.
- The National Veterinary Stockpile is strategically storing "strike packs" containing personal protective equipment supplies designed to protect response personnel from influenza viruses. These strike packs can be deployed within 24 hours to the site of an outbreak in the United States.
- Increasing intelligence gathering and other activities, in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security, to target illegal shipments of birds and bird products.
- USDA recently posted online a draft summary of the National Avian Influenza Response Plan. This plan would guide the steps taken by USDA and our State and industry partners following a detection of highly pathogenic H5N1 AI in domestic poultry.

Additional information about USDA avian influenza efforts can be found at <http://www.usda.gov/birdflu> and at U.S. government's comprehensive web source at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>.