



Update: Avian Flu

Being stationed in a remote area requires service members and their families to be aware of local emerging diseases and how to prevent them. On May 12, 2008 a U.S. military health official said scientists are trying to determine if avian flu has become endemic in South Korea's wild birds, meaning it's a threat year-round and not just during the winter migratory season. Health workers have confirmed two cases of the H5N1 virus in Seoul in the past week and a half. Other cases have been confirmed throughout the rest of the country in recent weeks. In Japan, a small outbreak of avian flu occurred near Misawa Air Base several weeks ago. In Indonesia, from January 2008 to June 19, 2008, 18 cases of Avian Bird Flu have crossed over to the human population resulting in 15 deaths. To date, of the 135 cases confirmed in Indonesia, 110 have been fatal. China has had 30 confirmed cases of avian flu with 20 deaths; the latest case occurred in February of 2008. Myanmar had its first confirmed case in December of 2007. We want to ensure people are aware that the avian flu does exist in some of the areas where TGRO beneficiaries are stationed and travel. Our goal is to inform our beneficiaries of preventive measures and provide resources to acquire additional information about Avian Flu from the most up-to-date and knowledgeable sites.

Avian Flu has the potential to spread and become pandemic if precautions are not taken. This has yet to occur in any area due to the World Health Organization (WHO) and local health departments' relentless efforts to educate and track all episodes of reported flu that may have originated due to poultry. Avian Flu virus has caused serious disease among wild birds and poultry on multiple continents. Human infections with the viruses are still rare. The WHO's Dr Ian Barr has told a Canberra conference the virus currently presents minimal risk for humans, but it should be monitored in case it mutates into a more virulent form. "It's a very widespread virus currently and it's quite a nasty virus," he said. "I think in terms of ones that we'd like to keep an eye on most closely, it's the one." The CDC recommends that citizens living abroad be aware of the Avian Bird Flu situation in their local area and seek out the preventive health recommendations made by the local country's Ministry of Health and government.

If the virus has been isolated in the country where you reside, monitor the local announcements as well as the updates provided at the [CDC Avian Influenza](#), [WHO](#) and [OIE](#) websites. Avoid areas where fowl are being raised or processed (farms, markets, restaurants) and avoid any dead wild birds encountered. Thorough cooking of fowl destroys the virus. Ensure you check the food being served to you – a good idea to avoid other possible food-borne contaminants as well.

Below are the links to DoD, CDC & WHO websites that can provide more information about diseases that should be considered when traveling around the globe or living in remote areas. These sites have the most up-to-date and accurate information about outbreaks, what you should do to prepare for travel, and areas you should avoid:

<http://fhp.osd.mil/aiWatchboard> Excellent DoD site for Avian Flu and Pandemic Flu

http://fhp.osd.mil/aiWatchboard/detection_surveillance.jsp#mapconfirmedhumancases DoD site specific area info

<http://www.cdc.gov> General Site for the CDC

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx> Specific CDC site for travelers to access and check travel destinations.

<http://www.who.int/en> World Health Organization gives the most up to date disease outbreaks throughout world.

As always, we are interested in your feedback and any ideas for health care issues you would like our office to address in the future. Contact us at TPHI@med.navy.mil.

Sincerely,
CAPT James Marron
Medical Director, TRICARE Area Office-Pacific
DSN 315-643-2054 / Comm 011-81-611-743-2054