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To date, no case of avian flu caused by the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus has been detected in the Americas

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) recommends that all countries and communities of the Americas prepare themselves for a possible flu pandemic

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WHAT CAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS DO TO PREVENT AVIAN FLU?

Avian flu has already affected a large number of communities around the world. In 2003, the first outbreaks of birds infected by the H5N1 virus were detected in China. Since then, avian flu cases have spread from Asia through other communities in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Though the H5N1 virus mainly affects birds, to date, more than 200 people have also become infected through close contact with infected birds.

How can infection by the avian flu virus be avoided?

Avian flu from the H5N1 virus is transmitted by migratory birds such as ducks, geese, swan, gulls, and other wild flocks.

Domestic poultry can become infected through close contact with wild migratory birds. Feces from infected birds can contaminate animal feed, chick drinkers, cages, footwear and farmer's clothes, live animals markets, slaughter houses, and the tires of vehicles driving over contaminated soil.



Separate domestic poultry from wild birds

What can local governments do to prevent avian flu?

Local governments can educate and prepare their communities against possible outbreaks of avian flu. The following are some effective actions:

- 1 Inform and raise awareness of the significance of avian flu and the availability of effective preventive and control measures.
- 2 Set up a planning committee for emergencies including representatives from all parties involved.
- 3 Establish a surveillance and education system for families living in risk areas (backyard farmers living near wetlands for migratory birds) to seek and immediately report any unusual cases of death or disease in domestic poultry, wild birds, or other animals.
- 4 Provide incentives for farmers to comply with the following basic biosafety measures:
 - Keep chickens and domestic ducks in protected areas separate from free-range animals, especially wild birds.
 - Keep poultry separated from pigs in the same facilities.
- 5 Promote hand washing with running water and soap.
- 6 Advise parents and caregivers to keep children away from wild birds and domestic poultry.
- 7 Conduct a simulation exercise to anticipate possible interventions such as closing of live animals markets and quarantine of affected premises to emphasize the importance of surveillance and prevention.

Report unusual bird deaths immediately to health authorities

e-FluInfo will help keep you informed about local preparedness for avian flu outbreaks and a possible human influenza pandemic.