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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 IS AVIAN FLU?

As its name indicates, it is a flu that originally affects birds. By nature, all flu viruses change continually. One of the avian flu viruses that is currently circulating is known as H5N1 and is highly lethal for domestic birds such as chickens. Ducks and other migratory birds can carry the H5N1 virus without becoming sick, and can transmit H5N1 to other birds, primarily through their excrement.

Can people become infected with the avian flu virus?

The avian flu virus mainly affects birds. Fortunately, it is not well adapted to the human body and so far has infected just slightly more than 200 people worldwide. Almost all of these people lived in very close contact with infected birds.



Don't touch sick or dead birds

Why is there so much concern surrounding the avian flu virus?

The H5N1 virus that is currently circulating is highly lethal for domestic birds. Tens of millions of chickens have died or have been culled in affected areas. Avian flu can have a negative economic impact on the poultry industry and on a large number of rural families who depend on backyard poultry farming. It is therefore important to rapidly report any cases of dead birds to the authorities.

On the other hand, the risk exists that at any moment the avian flu virus could change and adapt to be able to thrive in and be transmitted between humans. If this happens, H5N1 could infect people around the world in what is known as a pandemic, potentially causing millions of deaths.

Seek and immediately report cases of dead birds to the authorities

When is avian flu expected to reach the countries of the Americas?

No one knows for sure where or when the first cases could arrive in our region. Since 2003, the H5N1 avian flu has spread through Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. It is foreseeable that, following the routes of migratory birds, the avian flu could also reach the Western Hemisphere.

e-FluInfo will help you stay informed about avian influenza and steps you should take to prepare for a possible flu pandemic.