



HELLENIC CENTRE FOR DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL
MINISTRY OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

AVIAN INFLUENZA PREVENTION
GUIDANCE FOR AIRLINES OPERATING FLIGHTS TO ENDEMIC COUNTRIES
April 2006

The present guidelines have been drawn by the Hellenic Centre for Disease Prevention (KEELPNO) of the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity. Their purpose is to assist the airlines in taking the appropriate measures for the prevention of exposure of crew and passengers to the virus, in promptly detecting possible disease in passengers or crew members on flight and in maintaining the smooth operation of flights in the event of disease manifestation.

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza or “bird flu” is a contagious disease caused by an influenza virus type A that affects many kinds of birds globally. Its clinical manifestation in infected birds varies from asymptomatic carriage of the virus to severe disease and death.

How is the avian influenza virus transmitted?

Avian influenza is transmitted from birds to humans through direct contact with infected poultry or contact with surfaces contaminated with their faeces or secretions. Transmission is difficult and so far human outbreaks have been rare; however the disease mortality is high. The majority of the transmitted cases were reported in rural areas of Southeast Asia and most of them were due to close contact with dead poultry during slaughtering and defeathering or food preparation. Transmission from human to human has not yet been proven, but has been suspected in isolated cases after close and prolonged contact with patients.

Consumption of properly cooked meat and eggs is considered to be safe. Theoretically, transmission of the virus could occur from undercooked poultry meat or inadequately boiled eggs.

So far, no specific vaccine for avian influenza is available. Seasonal influenza vaccine does not protect against avian influenza.

How does the disease manifest in humans?

Avian influenza in humans usually presents with flu-like symptoms, such as high fever, muscle aches, severe fatigue, sore throat, cough and nasal congestion.

Which countries have been affected by outbreaks in poultry?¹

Up to date, outbreaks of avian influenza among **poultry and human cases** have been reported in [Azerbaijan](#), [Cambodia](#), [China](#), [Egypt](#), [Indonesia](#), [Iraq](#), [Thailand](#), [Turkey](#) and [Vietnam](#).

Outbreaks **among poultry** only have been confirmed in [Europe](#) in [Albania](#), [France](#), [N. Cyprus \(occupied territory\)](#), [Romania](#), [Russia](#), [Serbia](#), [Sweden](#), [Ukraine](#), in [Asia](#) in [Afghanistan](#), [Burma](#), [India](#), [Israel](#), [Japan](#), [Jordan](#), [Kazakhstan](#), [S. Korea](#), [Laos](#), [Malaysia](#), [Pakistan](#) and in [Africa](#) in [Cameroon](#), [Niger](#) and [Nigeria](#).

Outbreaks **among wild migratory birds** are increasingly being reported in European countries.

¹ *The list of countries reporting avian influenza may change. For updated information please refer to the KEELPNO webpage www.keel.org.gr or the World Health Organization (WHO) web page www.who.int.*

Recommended planning for avian influenza prevention

Timely planning is warranted aiming at the prevention of crew exposure to the virus and at the prompt recognition and management of a potential case on flight.

Priority should be given to programming the following:

1. Staff training, focusing on the following:

a. Aircraft and ground crew

- Prevention of crew exposure to the virus during their stay in endemic areas
- Sensitization of crew for prompt detection and effective management of a potential case
- Minimization of crew exposure to the infectious agent when assisting a patient
- Co-operation with the Airport Health Authorities.

b. Aircraft cleaning services

- Implementation of effective cleaning and disinfection procedures on the aircraft after the manifestation of a potential case
- Prevention of exposure to contaminated biological fluids

2. Provision of equipment and disposables

Storage and maintenance of sufficient equipment and disposables on aircrafts for the prevention of transmission of infectious diseases

- Alcohol solution for hand cleansing
- Thermometers
- Tissues
- Common surgical masks
- Disposable gloves
- Well sealing plastic waste bags
- Disposable aprons
- Disinfectant solutions

- Isolation area for ill passengers (e.g. last two seats in the rear of the aircraft).

3. Establishment of communication and co-operation channels with Airport Health Authorities

A potential case on flight should always be managed in co-operation with the Airport Health Services of the receiving airport.

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (KEELPNO) can provide scientific guidance, as well as information material regarding preventive measure planning.

4. Information for travellers

Airline contribution to travellers' awareness about avian influenza is considered to be essential. Information leaflets for travellers have been produced by KEELPNO in Greek and English language.

Preventive measures for travellers towards the endemic areas should also be followed by the flying crew while disembarking and staying for certain period of time in a area where avian flu cases have been reported. Likewise, the guidelines should be followed by the staff of the airports of the endemic countries.

The following detailed guidelines are attached:

1. Guidelines for flight crew in relation to the management of a potential avian flu case during the flight
2. Guidelines for the airport staff who get in contact with passengers
3. Guidelines for aircraft cleaning after the manifestation of a potential avian flu case
4. Guidelines for staff handling cargo, parcels and luggage

As the avian influenza epidemic progresses, the above guidelines may be modified. For updated information please contact the Travel Medicine Office of the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (KEELPNO) on the telephone number **210-5212000 or refer to the KEELPNO webpage www.keel.org.gr or the World Health Organization (WHO) web page www.who.int .**