

Cluster of Suspected Avian Influenza in Pakistan

A team of international experts is assisting with the investigation of a family cluster of suspected cases of A/H5N1 influenza in Pakistan. The index case is a veterinary officer who became symptomatic on the 25th of October and is thought to have been infected through exposure to infected poultry during a culling operation. Five of his brothers have subsequently become ill, two of whom have died. Limited human-to-human transmission resulting from intensive exposure among the family members who cared for their sick relative cannot be excluded at this time. In a separate investigation, two other poultry workers from neighbouring towns were reported on the 5th and 6th of December with an acute febrile illness and have tested preliminary positive for A/H5N1.

Toronto health care providers are being asked to continue surveillance for febrile respiratory illness (FRI) using the FRI Guidelines.¹

Report patients who meet the following criteria to Toronto Public Health (TPH):

1. a new/worse cough or shortness of breath **AND**
2. fever ($\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$) **AND**
3. a history of travel in the past fourteen days to a country with a health alert or suspect/confirmed avian influenza, **OR** contact with a sick person who has traveled in the past fourteen days to a country with a health alert or suspect/confirmed avian influenza.^{2,3,4}

During regular business hours, report to TPH's main surveillance line at 416-392-7411. After hours or during holidays call 416-690-2142.

TPH will advise and arrange for appropriate testing of specimens.

If you suspect avian influenza, ensure implementation of the following infection control measures for health care workers: hand hygiene, the use of gloves, and N-95 respirators. Eye protection should be worn when providing care within 1 metre of the patient and a gown may be worn during procedures and patient care activities where clothing might be contaminated.

Important links:

1. Ministry of Health and Long Term Care Provincial Infectious Disease Advisory Committee FRI Guidelines:
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/infectious/diseases/ic_fri.html
2. Public Health Agency of Canada travel advisories:
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/index.html>
3. WHO avian influenza updates:
http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html
4. PROMED (for updated notes from the field):
<http://www.promedmail.org>