



衛生防護中心
Centre for Health Protection

Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases

Recommendations To Reduce Risk of H5N1 Avian Influenza Infection

In view of the increasing threat of avian influenza, the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases, Centre for Health Protection has made the following assessment and recommendations to minimize the risk of transmission from wild birds, farm poultry and market poultry to the local human population.

Wild Birds

2. In surveillance of live and dead wild birds done by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department in the past three years, the isolation of H5N1 virus was uncommon. The absolute risk of man contracting avian influenza from wild birds and migratory birds is thus considered low. However, the risk is higher with contact with sick / dead birds and their droppings, in winters and around water sources where wild birds feed, due to a higher chance of contacting bird droppings.

3. The above risks should be communicated to the public, who should be advised to observe personal hygiene at all times, particularly after contacting dead / sick birds or bird droppings.

4. In view of the recent detection in local wild birds of avian influenza H5N1 genotype V, which has not been detected in Hong Kong before, epidemiological investigation should be conducted to find out how these wild birds were infected.



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Farm Poultry

5. The level of biosecurity in Hong Kong farms must be maintained to a standard comparable with other developed countries. This should be monitored with due diligence.

6. The Scientific Committee is concerned about the large increase in total number of chickens in local farms since 1997. As a large number of chickens presents difficulties in controlling avian influenza outbreaks should biosecurity measures fail, the Scientific Committee recommends that the Government review the relevant policies and legislations, including those governing the holding capacity of chicken farms with the view to decreasing the capacity of these farms.

7. All farm chickens in Hong Kong are currently vaccinated against highly pathogenic avian influenza. Antibody titre of vaccinated chickens against the prevalent highly pathogenic avian influenza H5 isolates should be regularly monitored to ensure that the vaccine is protective.

Market Poultry

8. Effective surveillance of all dead poultry is important. Its performance should be closely monitored.

9. To minimize human contact with avian influenza viruses, the Scientific Committee recommends that the ultimate goal is “no live poultry in local wet markets”.

Backyard Poultry

10. Unvaccinated backyard poultry, not protected by biosecurity measures in their living environment, are at risk of infection by wild birds. Banning of backyard poultry is a prudent step to safeguard public health.

Centre for Health Protection
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