



Department of Human Services

Incorporating: Health, Community Services, Housing and Senior Victorians

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Vigilance for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI or Influenza A H5N1)

An update for Victorian General Practitioners and Hospital Medical Officers – June 2006

Dear Colleagues

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has in recent times received a number of queries in relation to the purchasing/use of antivirals for HPAI. The following is provided for your information:

Information for Travellers to Avian Influenza Affected Countries

Detailed information for travellers is available from the Smart Traveller website operated by the Australian government (www.smarttraveller.gov.au). The essential points as at 24 May 2006 are:

- Australians who reside in an avian influenza affected area for an extended period, to consider, as a precautionary measure, having access to influenza antiviral medicine for treatment;
- Australians travelling to areas affected by avian influenza can reduce their risk of infection by:
 - avoiding situations where they may come into contact with farms and live bird markets, and
 - ensuring all uncooked poultry and eggs are handled hygienically, with careful attention to hand washing after handling, and then cooked thoroughly. Proper cooking destroys the virus in poultry and eggs.

There is no recommendation for Australians making short-term visits to Asia or other affected countries to carry antiviral medications.

Information Regarding Oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) for Seasonal Influenza

As well as supplying governments with oseltamivir as part of their pandemic preparedness planning, Roche has stated that oseltamivir will now be available for the treatment and prevention of seasonal influenza.

Countries Reporting Avian Influenza

Given the rapid changes in the international situation, for regularly updated information on the countries and areas in which there have been confirmed human cases of HPAI, please see:

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/

Countries where HPAI has been reported (proven/suspected) in birds in the last 12 months can be found at www.oie.int whilst regularly updated maps of the distribution of proven Influenza A H5N1 amongst birds can be found at:

<http://gamapserver.who.int/mapLibrary/app/searchResults.aspx>

When to Suspect Avian Influenza

Have a high index of suspicion for Avian Influenza in returned travelers who have influenza-like illness with onset of symptoms within seven days of having been in the following situations:

- Have been in *affected areas* and have had close contact with poultry, poultry farms, or raw poultry products (for example in food markets);
- Have had contact with a person who is a confirmed case of avian influenza;
- Laboratory workers possibly exposed to avian influenza.

Remember

- Assess returned travellers who meet the above criteria in a separate room or at their own home;
- Provide the patient with a mask and wear full protective equipment, this includes a mask (preferably P2/N95), gloves, gown and eye protection (goggles, visor or face shield);
- Take a travel/work history from all patients with fever or influenza-like symptoms;
- **Report any suspected cases immediately by telephone to the DHS on 1300 651 160.**

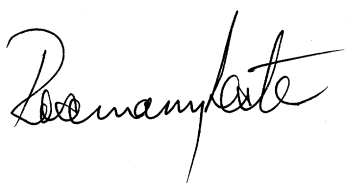
After discussion with the DHS, if avian influenza is suspected, please obtain laboratory confirmation as follows:

- Take a throat swab PLUS nasal swab;
- Place all swabs in a single vial of viral transport medium;
- Send to state reference laboratory (this can be done via your usual laboratory) clearly marked:

Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory (VIDRL)
10 Wreckyn St North Melbourne 3051
"URGENT, SUSPECTED H5N1 INFLUENZA — FOR TESTING AT VIDRL"

If you would like further information please see our website at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas>, or call the Communicable Disease Control Unit on 1300 651 160.

Yours sincerely



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Communicable Disease Control Unit