

Date: May 4, 2022

To: South Zone Physicians

From: Medical Officers of Health – South Zone

RE: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1

As you are aware, highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 has recently been identified in some poultry establishments in Alberta. Outbreaks have been reported in other Canadian Provinces, the USA and in Europe.

At this time, transmission to humans has been infrequent and has not led to severe illness. A precautionary approach is being taken to minimize impact on human and animal health.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Alberta Agriculture are working with impacted farms to facilitate testing of birds, depopulating flocks and cleaning and disinfection. Additionally, they are reminding farm workers of appropriate personal protective equipment, including N-95 respirator, eye protection, gloves, fluid resistant apron/coveralls, and hair/foot coverings. Impacted farm workers are recommended to contact Health Link Alberta if they develop symptoms to assist in linkage with public health and to re-iterate preventive messaging.

Signs and symptoms of HPAI in humans - fever, cough, coryza, shortness of breath, sore throat, myalgia, arthralgia, headache, conjunctivitis, prostration - and less commonly diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and seizures.

Incubation period - The incubation period averages 2-5 days (outside limit 10).

Communicability period - is from 1 day prior to symptoms to the longer of 7 days following onset or the resolution of symptoms.

Actions for physicians for symptomatic individuals exposed to infected birds:

- Obtain NP swab on UTM media and request Influenza testing:
 - On Provincial Lab requisition form: specify H5N1 testing and noting that patient has been in contact with infected birds/materials.
 - Contact the Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) Provincial Public Health Laboratory Virologist on call through ROCA: Calgary Zone > Foothills Medical Centre (FMC) > Lab Services-ProvLab.
- IPC measures - Ensure modified respiratory precautions in place similar to COVID-19 precautions are in place.
- Recommend symptomatic poultry worker to isolate at home until test results available.
- Please notify the MOH on call, if worker has not previously contacted health link or public health.

- Early treatment – despite mild symptoms, current recommendation by provincial communicable disease control is for physician to review need for Oseltamivir treatment. <http://www.ahs.ca/assets/info/hp/phys/cen/if-hp-phys-moh-cz-antiviral-dosing-recommendations.pdf>