

## Infection Control Measures and Bird Flu

*The type of influenza (flu) virus that is currently affecting wild and domestic birds in other parts of the world is called highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1. HPAI H5N1 (bird flu) has a high death rate in some birds. It is unusual because it has also infected some people, and over 50% of those known to be infected have died. Most of the infected people have become sick after coming into close contact with infected birds without wearing a mask or using gloves. There is concern that this HPAI H5N1 virus could change and become easily transmitted from person to person, causing a global pandemic, or worldwide human illness. It is important to keep in mind that there is no human influenza pandemic in the world at this time.*

- ❖ Measures to help prevent spreading influenza to other people include the following: wash your hands often, cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze and wash your hands afterwards, stay home if you are sick, and maintain overall good health.
- ❖ During a pandemic, suspension of community activities such as sporting events, concerts, and church services may be helpful to slow the spread of the virus. Schools may also be closed. In addition, people who are not sick but who may have been exposed may be asked to stay home, possibly for weeks at a time. This is called voluntary quarantine, and it may also help slow the spread of the virus.
- ❖ Recommendations for suspension of community activities, school closures, or voluntary quarantine will come from the NH Governor's office and from the NH Department of Health and Human Services.
- ❖ During a pandemic, there may also be travel or workplace restrictions. People should prepare as they would for any potential emergency that could keep them at home for an extended period of time. An emergency preparedness brochure can be found at the following link:  
<http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dhhs/dphs/library/brochure/7-makes-sense.htm>

- ❖ Disposable surgical masks kept in a family emergency kit may be useful for many emergency situations, such as fires and diseases spread by particles in the air. Surgical masks can be purchased at home improvement stores, drug stores, and on-line. They may help protect people from H5N1 avian flu once the virus can spread from person to person.
- ❖ The US Department of Health and Human Services is presently recommending the use of N-95 respirators (masks that filter smaller particles than surgical masks) by medical personnel in health care settings when they perform direct care activities involving patients with confirmed or suspected avian flu. Medical personnel should also be using gowns, gloves, and face shields.
- ❖ The use and/or stockpiling of N-95 respirators by the general public, or by other groups such as first responders, is not currently recommended. N-95 respirators need to be fit-tested for the individual wearing them and must be used appropriately in order to be effective.

**For specific concerns about bird flu, call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Communicable Disease Control Section at 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345 x4496. For further information, refer to the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services website at [www.avianflu.nh.gov](http://www.avianflu.nh.gov) or the US Department of Health and Human Services website at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).**