

HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI) H5N1

Date: Thursday, May 05, 2022
To: All North Zone Physicians and Nurse Practitioners
From: Dr. Kathryn Koliaska, North Zone Lead Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Jack Pang, North Zone Medical Officer of Health
Subject: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1

Outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 have recently been identified in poultry in Alberta. Outbreaks have occurred in other Provinces, the USA, and Europe. Control measures include depopulating flocks and disinfection. Recommended PPE for workers with infected flocks includes N-95 respirator, eye protection, gloves, fluid resistant apron/coveralls, and hair and foot coverings.

At this time, transmission to humans has been infrequent and without severe illness. However, as a precautionary measure, workers at farms affected by HPAI will be notified to contact Health Link, who will refer them to Provincial Communicable Disease Control (CDC) to assess their exposure and screen for symptoms.

Signs and symptoms of HPAI in humans include fever, cough, coryza, shortness of breath, sore throat, myalgia, arthralgia, headache, conjunctivitis, prostration - and less commonly diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and seizures. The incubation period averages 2-5 days (outside limit 10). Communicability is from 1 day prior to symptoms to the longer of 7 days following onset or the resolution of symptoms.

Provincial CDC will recommend symptomatic workers receive testing for HPAI and COVID-19, and be reviewed by a physician/nurse-practitioner regarding the need for Oseltamivir treatment. If HPAI infection is suspected, Oseltamivir should be provided without delay; waiting for lab confirmation is not recommended. For Oseltamivir dosing, see the following link: [AHS oseltamivir antiviral dosing recommendations based on AMMI guidance](#)

The Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) Provincial Public Health Laboratory (Provincial Lab) virologist on-call must be notified of HPAI testing requests before collection of specimens. Collect specimens as you would for COVID-19. Lab requisitions must specify "H5N1/Avian Flu" testing with a note that the individual was a contact of infected birds/materials. For in-person assessments, Infection Prevention and Control measures are modified respiratory precautions, identical to those for COVID-19 which can be found at the following link: [FAQs on Infection Prevention & Control \(IPC\) and Exposure - for Community Physicians \(albertahealthservices.ca\)](#). It is recommended that workers isolate at home until test results are available.

If the worker has not notified AHS public health (via HealthLINK) immediately prior to the physician/nurse-practitioner consultation, please notify:

- 0800-1630h (daily including weekends and stat holidays) contact Communicable Disease Control, North Zone at 1-855-444-2324 or email AHS.NZ.CDC.Intake@ahs.ca
- After hours, contact North Zone Public Health on-call: 1-800-732-8981 who will consult with MOH on-call as necessary.

Thank you for your attention and assistance. This communication will be posted to www.albertahealthservices.ca/medstaff/Page7082.aspx MOH Bulletins for your reference.