

Date: Monday, April 18, 2022

To: Central Zone: Emergency Department and Urgent Care Physicians and Staff; Family, Paediatric, Hospitalist, and Internal Medicine Physicians; Nurse Practitioners; UofA Rural Family Medicine Residents; Chief Zone Officer and Medical Director; Medical Affairs; Senior Operating Officers; Executive Directors, Area Directors, Public Health Directors and Managers; Lab; Pharmacy; Emergency Disaster Management; Workplace Health & Safety; Infection Prevention & Control; Communicable Disease Outbreak; Environmental Public Health; Emergency Medical Services; Communications

Copy: Provincial Notifiable Diseases CDC; Provincial Medical Officers of Health; Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health; Provincial Public Health Veterinarian

From: Dr. Digby Horne, Medical Officer of Health – Central Zone

Subject: Central Zone Outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 in Poultry Flocks

Several outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 have recently been identified in poultry flocks in Central Zone. Outbreaks have occurred in other provinces, Europe, and the USA. Control measures include bird depopulations 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 rare and without severe illness. However, as a precautionary measure, workers at affected Central Zone farms affected by HPAI will be notified to contact Health Link, who will refer them to Provincial Notifiable Disease 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, myalgias, arthralgias, 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 Notifiable Disease CDC will recommend symptomatic workers receive testing for HPAI and COVID-19 and are 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 dosing see www.ahs.ca/assets/info/hp/phys/cen/if-hp-phys-moh-cz-antiviral-dosing-recommendations.pdf). The Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) virologist on-call must be notified of HPAI testing requests; lab requisitions must specify HPAI testing. For in-person assessments, Infection Prevention Control measures are identical to those for COVID-19. Workers need to isolate at home until test results are available. If the worker has not notified Provincial Notifiable Disease CDC immediately prior to the physician/nurse-practitioner consultation, please notify the Medical Officer of Health on-call 403-356-6430.

Thank you for your attention and assistance.