



# ASCIP *RISK ALERT!*

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**Date:** April 21, 2006

**Attention:** ASCIP Members

**Subject:** AVIAN INFLUENZA VIRUS

Avian Influenza Virus is a disease which has been the subject of media reports for some time and has now been reported in several regions of the globe outside of the Americas. While primarily passed from bird to bird, a number of human cases have been documented and health professionals fear that future mutations of this virus may permit it to be passed to humans on a broad scale.

The West Coast of the United States is of specific concern for disease transmission from birds to humans because it shares the migration route which is used by millions of wildfowl each year as they fly to and from Canada and South America. As diseased birds fall out along the route, rest, die, or interact with local healthy birds, a human disease outbreak could occur and initiate a Statewide SEMS response. Although indications may differ among species, in birds the symptoms of this virus and some other illnesses may include disorientation, diarrhea, breathing difficulties, swollen head and unexplained death. A sick bird sheds the virus in its feathers, mucous, saliva and feces.

Because very young children explore by handling and tasting their environment and older children may investigate sick or dead animals out of curiosity it is important to ensure that children and employees do not come in contact with any sick, dead, or potentially diseased birds to avoid the potential for infection. Frequent inspections of locations where children are present should include a sweep for sick or dead birds. A protocol to safely remove and dispose of suspect birds should be developed for each location. Much like other 'type A' influenzas, symptoms of the Avian Flu Virus in humans include fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, and conjunctivitis but 'Bird Flu' is more likely to cause breathing problems and pneumonia and can be fatal. In addition to certain specific medications specified for treating this specific influenza strain some efforts to avoid other common types of flu virus exposure may also be effective in limiting the human spread of avian influenza.

Since Avian Flu is a worldwide concern, the Federal Government is working with the various state and foreign governments to establish certain protocols by which this issue may be addressed. The California Department of Health Services (DHS) has an internet web page dedicated to this issue containing specific recommendations as well as a copy of the 170 page January, 2006, DRAFT *DHS Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Response Plan*. Should more specific direction be made available it would be passed through the various levels of government to local authorities. We hope that this information is of interest.

*Reviewed July, 2006*