

Avian Influenza
International Partnership To Meet A Global Threat

"If left unchallenged, this virus could become the first pandemic of the 21st century. We must not allow that to happen. Today I am announcing a new International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza… It is essential we work together, and as we do so, we will fulfill a moral duty to protect our citizens, and heal the sick, and comfort the afflicted."

– President George W. Bush

The U.S. Government is concerned that the ongoing outbreaks of avian influenza in birds have the potential to turn into a human influenza pandemic that would have significant global health, economic, and social consequences. President Bush has requested $7.1 billion in emergency funding to immediately begin implementing a national strategy for pandemic influenza. This funding includes $251 million to detect and contain outbreaks before they spread around the world.

GOALS OF THE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

- Elevate the avian influenza issue on national agendas
- Coordinate efforts among donor and affected nations
- Mobilize and leverage resources
- Increase transparency in disease reporting and the quality of surveillance
- Build local capacity to identify, contain and respond to an influenza pandemic

WORLDWIDE PROBLEM

To date, outbreaks of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza have been confirmed among birds in Cambodia, China, Croatia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Laos, Mongolia, Romania, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam. Japan, Malaysia, and South Korea have also experienced outbreaks in the past. More than 60 deaths out of a total of over 120 human cases of the disease have been confirmed in Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Avian influenza has occasionally spread from bird to human, but is not easily spread from human to human. A specific vaccine for humans that is effective against avian influenza has not yet been approved. Based upon limited data, the Centers for Disease Control have suggested that the anti-viral medication Oseltamavir (brand name-Tamiflu) may be effective in preventing or treating avian influenza.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

President Bush announced the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza during the UN General Assembly in September 2005. The first meeting of the Partnership took place October 6-7 in Washington, D.C., hosted by the U.S. Department of State.

The meeting involved top foreign affairs, health and agriculture officials from 88 countries, as well as representatives from eight international organizations, including the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health.

The meeting's main objective was to affirm the commitment of participating countries to work together in combating avian and pandemic influenza and to identify priority areas for further action. Three general topic areas were covered: surveillance and prevention; preparedness, planning and outreach; and response and containment of avian influenza.

ASSISTANCE FOR AFFECTED COUNTRIES

The United States is implementing the $25 million that the President earlier signed in an emergency supplemental to prevent and control the spread of avian influenza in Southeast Asia, in addition to providing more than $13 million in technical assistance and grants to affected countries in Southeast Asia and to the World Health Organization for influenza pandemic preparedness in the past year.

U.S. DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS

President Bush has released a national strategy that draws on the combined efforts of government officials and the public health, medical, veterinary, and law enforcement communities, as well as the private sector. The strategy is designed to meet three critical goals: detecting human or animal outbreaks that occur anywhere in the world; protecting the American people by stockpiling vaccines and antiviral drugs while improving the capacity to produce new vaccines; and preparing to respond at the federal, state and local levels in the event an avian or pandemic influenza reaches the United States.