U.S. Department of Agriculture

Pandemic Planning Report

From Secretary Mike Johanns

June 29, 2006

Message from the Secretary

The *Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza* assigns responsibility to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for leading the Federal Government's animal health efforts to combat highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza (HPAI H5N1) worldwide. The HPAI H5N1 strain of avian influenza is often fatal to birds and is of greatest current concern in affected and high-risk countries.

Accordingly, USDA provides international technical assistance and conducts rapid response missions to prevent, detect and contain HPAI H5N1. Equally important are our domestic efforts to enhance our capacity to rapidly detect and effectively respond to HPAI H5N1 in bird populations, if it reaches the United States. We are working on multiple fronts with multiple partners to safeguard against HPAI H5N1 in both wild birds and commercial poultry.

Additionally, USDA maintains trade restrictions on the importation of poultry from regions where HPAI H5N1 has been detected in domestic flocks. As one of the world's largest producers and exporters of poultry meat and the second-largest egg producer, we also are mindful of the economic implications of an outbreak for U.S. agriculture.

This report details our efforts both internationally and domestically to combat HPAI H5N1.

Working with Federal and State government partners, as well as industry, we are preparing the public for the possibility of an HPAI H5N1 detection in birds in the United States, informing them of our capability to respond to and contain the disease, and reminding them how to safely handle and cook poultry and its products. We are specifically working with industry stakeholders to help them develop and implement comprehensive preparedness plans that address issues such as, humane mass euthanasia of poultry flocks should there be a detection, proper carcass disposal, proper protection of poultry workers, as well as best practices in controlling an outbreak.

USDA takes seriously the responsibility of educating the public about avian influenza by providing clear, factual information about where threats exist and where they do not. This education has been an important part of our overall efforts. Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt and I have spent a significant amount of time educating the news media about avian influenza and are committed to provide as much information to the public as quickly and often as possible.

USDA's vigilant efforts aim to slow the spread of HPAI overseas and prepare for the possible arrival HPAI H5N1 in the United States. We are committed to protecting animal health and ensuring that our nation continues to provide the safest food supply in the world.

Mike Johanns
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Overview

Avian Influenza – often referred to as 'bird flu' – is a disease caused by a virus that infects domestic poultry, wild birds (such as quail, cranes, geese and ducks) and pet birds such as parrots. There is a flu for birds, just as there is for humans, and as with people, some forms of flu are worse than others.

There are two types of avian influenza (AI) that are both identified as H5N1. A difference exists in the virus classification; one is low-pathogenicity (LPAI) and the other is high-pathogenicity (HPAI). Pathogenicity refers to the ability of the virus to produce disease. HPAI H5N1 is the type causing worldwide concern. LPAI H5N1 is relatively common and poses a lesser risk to both animal and human health.

HPAI, or highly pathogenic AI, spreads rapidly and is often fatal to chickens and turkeys. Millions of birds have died in countries where HPAI H5N1 has been detected. This virus has also infected people, most of whom have had direct contact with infected birds. HPAI H5N1 has not been detected in either birds or humans in the United States. However, other strains of HPAI have been detected in poultry and eradicated three times in the United States: in 1924, 1983 and 2004. No human illness resulted from these outbreaks.

In order to protect the poultry and bird populations, as well as the human population, from HPAI H5N1, it is critical that the United States have a strong surveillance plan to ensure early detection and response plan to protect against the rapid spread of this virus. Controlling the disease in birds is a key component in protecting the public against a potential human pandemic of avian influenza.

To that end, USDA is the lead government agency in the government's efforts to combat avian influenza in birds. USDA recognizes that HPAI H5N1 poses a significant threat to agriculture and potentially to human health. Accordingly, the USDA is taking steps to safeguard against the introduction of HPAI H5N1 in the United States.

USDA Doctrine to Combat Spread of HPAI H5N1

- Support containment of the threat offshore through active engagement with our International partners
- Execute a sustained aggressive domestic surveillance program
- Develop and execute a proactive messaging campaign
- If needed, respond in accordance with the *National Avian Influenza Response Plan*

USDA is aggressively working overseas to slow the spread of the disease in poultry, while at the same time expanding our early warning system in the United States, and ensuring the preparedness to quickly and decisively respond to any eventual detection of HPAI H5N1 in poultry in the United States.

We are pleased to report on efforts undertaken with the $91.35 million appropriated to USDA in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriation to Address Pandemic Influenza (P.L. 109-148).

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

USDA is working closely with international organizations like the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and World Health Organization (WHO) to assist HPAI H5N1affected regions with disease prevention, management, and eradication activities. By helping these countries prepare for, manage, or eradicate HPAI H5N1 outbreaks, USDA can reduce the risk of the disease spreading from overseas to the United States.

We believe the most effective approach to protecting animal and public health is aggressive control of the HPAI H5N1 at its current source; the infected poultry of HPAI H5N1 affected regions. By proactively working to contain the virus among these infected birds, we are reducing opportunities for the virus to further spread among susceptible animals and/or mutate into a virus with pandemic potential. In short, USDA's international efforts represent "front line" battles to safeguard U.S. agriculture and mitigate the risk of an influenza pandemic.

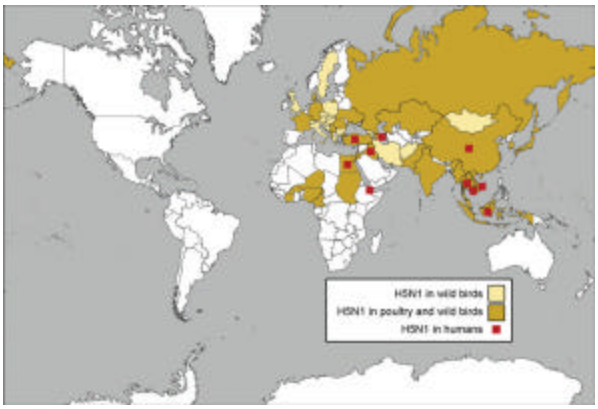
As a lead agency within the integrated U.S. Government response to HPAI worldwide, USDA is implementing a $21 million[1] comprehensive program of International activities that are directly aligned to the three pillars of the National Strategy: 1) Preparedness and Communication, 2) Surveillance and Detection, and 3) Response and Containment. The major activities in which we are involved include both emergency response, where U.S. specialists and resources are urgently needed to augment efforts in foreign countries to combat HPAI H5N1 in affected countries, as well as technical capacity building initiatives, where USDA contributes toward the development of sustainable veterinary infrastructure to prevent, detect, and eradicate animal diseases, like HPAI.

Preparedness and Communication

USDA is collaborating with OIE in several countries to help assess the needs of their veterinary infrastructure. In addition, USDA is providing short-term technical advisers to several countries on the incident command structure and animal health aspects of their national HPAI response plans. USDA also is providing workshops and short-term technical advisers to partner countries for regulations and enforcement of biosecurity standards to live bird markets abroad.

USDA is undertaking collaborative research on animal vaccines and disseminating information on vaccines and their potential applications to reduce HPAI with partner countries. While HPAI has not been recently detected domestically, and the current strain of concern of H5N1 has never been detected in the U.S., USDA is taking action to developing a plan to address trade concerns and to support adherence to OIE trade guidelines in case of a detection or outbreak of HPAI H5N1 in the United States.

[1] This includes $1.5 million transferred from the Agency for International Development from the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief (P.L. 109-13).



If there is a HPAI H5N1 outbreak in the United States, USDA will expect foreign countries to follow the OIE and the World Trade Organization (WTO) international sanitary standards. Should any trade partners take protectionist non-science-based trade restrictions-- for example, inappropriately banning all U.S. poultry and any other agricultural products, imposing restrictive import certificates, changing U.S. plant inspection procedures, and/or disrupting shipments enroute-- the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will work closely with the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), the United States Trade Representative, and the Department of State, to promptly work to eliminate unjustified restrictions.

USDA is establishing offices and personnel in China, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Indonesia, which will be dedicated exclusively to avian influenza activities and wherever possible, co-located with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offices; the office in Thailand is already established. We also plan to hire a local national veterinarian in Burma. Later this year, USDA will facilitate a series of regional courses on HPAI epidemiology and conduct an Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation seminar to assist in the design and implementation of farmer compensation programs and risk communication campaigns to support animal disease prevention, detection, and eradication efforts.

USDA has provided resources such as personal protective equipment and special packing boxes to all its overseas offices to safely transport suspect AI samples to labs for diagnosis. In addition, USDA provided HPAI literature to various U.S. embassies. USDA will continue to perform its role of providing the technical knowledge and support necessary to assist other countries in their handling of AI.

Surveillance and Detection

USDA is providing technical courses and short-term technical advisers to several countries on laboratory protocols and proficiency to detect HPAI, field techniques for surveillance and necropsy of wild birds, and applied epidemiology of HPAI. In some cases, USDA is delivering specialized technical equipment and materials to augment partner countries' existing infrastructure for surveillance and detection of HPAI.

Since February 2006, USDA has conducted three international H5N1 Influenza Testing and Diagnostics Courses at our National Veterinary Service Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa, where 99 specialists from 62 countries participated. USDA also deployed U.S. specialists to help participating countries – like Morocco, Romania, Indonesia and Vietnam- strengthen in-country animal health laboratories and testing programs. Additionally, seven international HPAI epidemiology courses are planned for late 2006 and early 2007.

Earlier this year, USDA cooperated with Senegal to help prepare and deploy a Senegalese specialist to Cameroon, where he augmented Cameroon's animal health laboratory during that country's HPAI H5N1 emergency eradication efforts. This is one example of how our international investments in veterinary infrastructure can have extensive benefits and, ultimately, assist "developing" countries and directly contribute toward international efforts to combat influenza and other transboundary animal diseases.

USDA has begun to collaborate with FAO to assist Cambodia on its national program for surveillance of wild birds for HPAI H5N1. Local habitat makes Cambodia a key country for surveillance of wild birds in Southeast Asia. USDA has partnered with FAO and the WHO to conduct national workshops in Vietnam and Cambodia on improvements to biosecurity and regulation of live bird markets. The workshop in Vietnam was crucial in helping launch an ongoing reform of national regulations, which cover issues like zoning, disinfection practices, and poultry surveillance.

The dramatic progress in Vietnam offers Cambodia a local model to help reinforce their national effort to strengthen enforcement of biosecurity regulations for live bird markets. USDA specialists have visited China to plan a collaborative study on transmission of HPAI H5N1 between wild and domestic species along with options to strengthen biosecurity to prevent influenza. Each of these initiatives is critical to improve the accuracy and timeliness of HPAI H5N1 detection so that rapid response for effective local containment is feasible.

Response and Containment

USDA is collaborating with FAO to establish the Emergency Center for Transboundary Animal Diseases Crisis Management Center (CMC), a new facility for coordination of multilateral rapid response missions to contain and eradicate HPAI in affected countries. FAO has formally accepted three USDA specialists for yearlong assignments to core positions within the Center. USDA is a principal partner with FAO on this critical project. The CMC is already operational and there is an aggressive timeline to bring it to full capacity with an incident command structure over the course of this year.

USDA support includes animal health incident command specialists to help manage the CMC during its initial year, as well as some funding for start-up costs in Rome. USDA is also deploying U.S. specialists for FAO-led rapid response missions. In addition, USDA is coordinating with the Department of State to provide technical specialists for rapid response missions. USDA provided diagnostics reagents to Senegal and Nigeria and plans to provide similar materials to Indonesia and Sudan.

DOMESTIC EFFORTS

USDA has worked to further strengthen safeguards in place to protect against the introduction of HPAI H5N1 into the United States. USDA maintains trade restrictions on the importation of poultry and poultry products from regions currently affected by HPAI H5N1 in commercial or traditionally raised flocks.

Increased surveillance between both wild and commercial bird populations serves as an early warning system and will help Federal and State officials rapidly detect and prevent spread of the disease in the United States. In the event of a detection of HPAI, APHIS personnel are the primary Federal responders along with State counterparts. APHIS and State animal health officials are working cooperatively with the poultry industry to conduct surveillance at breeding flocks, slaughter plants, live-bird markets, livestock auctions, and poultry dealers.

Preparedness and Communication

In addition to actions USDA is taking to protect the United States from an introduction of HPAI H5N1, USDA is preparing for the possibility that highly pathogenic avian influenza could reach our country. Of the supplemental funds, the Department has allocated approximately $25 million to enhance domestic preparedness and communication.

In coordination with other Federal agencies, USDA protects the United States against the intentional or unintentional introduction of foreign animal diseases or natural disasters affecting animal health, public health, and the food system. As part of this, the National Veterinary Stockpile (NVS) includes animal vaccine, personal protective equipment, and test kits necessary to support laboratory diagnostics for a coordinated emergency response. The NVS is designed to ensure that needed materials will be available and ready to deploy within 24 hours.

Current NVS efforts have been focused on preparing for a potential detection of HPAI H5N1. USDA has assembled resources to support and protect individuals in the field who would respond in the event of a possible HPAI H5N1 outbreak. Moreover, the NVS now holds 110 million doses of avian influenza vaccine (75 million of those doses protect against the H5 form of avian influenza – the form that includes HPAI H5N1). The NVS is currently negotiating for an additional 500 million doses.

USDA also has identified additional strategies to enhance the Nation's ability to respond to an HPAI event. The strategies include providing advanced training for the Agency's Incident Command teams; increasing the numbers of animal health care professionals who are made available to respond to an animal disease event; and, conducting exercises that simulate an HPAI event with Federal, State, local, Tribal, and non-government responders.

APHIS is coordinating several tabletop exercises with State and Federal partners that will focus on an outbreak of HPAI H5N1, and will test the response capability to a variety of HPAI events. Tabletop exercises in North Carolina and Georgia began in June, with several more exercises being planned for the near future. Members of State, Local, Tribal, and National Animal Health Emergency Response Corps (NAHERC) responders are invited to attend these exercises. The NAHERC members include animal health professionals at various levels of government as well

as from the private sector. Lessons learned in each exercise will be communicated to the response community.

USDA is assisting States in organizing, training, and equipping both the State Incident Management Teams and the NAHERC. These groups will operate as a robust early warning system to rapidly identify any introduction of HPAI; educate wildlife and domestic poultry groups on the signs and symptoms of HPAI and how to report it when they suspect it; and assist with response to an outbreak when the Agency's resources have been depleted.

FSIS also is working with local, State officials and industry to prepare for an outbreak of HPAI in a commercial poultry operation. FSIS has participated in tabletop exercises with public health officials, the poultry industry and local, State and Federal government leaders. USDA will ensure that important food safety messages, including the safety of properly handled, prepared, and cooked poultry, are incorporated into these readiness plans.

Surveillance and Detection

One of the pillars of the National Strategy is an aggressive surveillance and detection program. USDA has allocated about $47 million for this effort, of which approximately $28 million is for domestic poultry surveillance and $19 million is for wildlife surveillance.

Domestic Poultry Surveillance
There are four areas of concentration among domestic poultry: live bird marketing system, upland game, commercial/backyard surveillance outside of the live bird marketing system, and assistance to the broiler industry for expansion of AI surveillance in commercial operations through the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP). USDA will enter into cooperative agreements with the States to conduct surveillance and diagnostic activities for these four areas. It is anticipated that all agreements will be signed by July 1, 2006.

APHIS' National Veterinary Services Laboratories will provide support to approved laboratories that will process samples submitted from the HPAI surveillance program. In addition, FSIS is preparing its three laboratories located in Athens, Georgia; St. Louis, Missouri; and Alameda, California to be able to respond in the event that HPAI H5N1 is detected in a commercial poultry operation. Laboratory personnel are being provided with the necessary training to become proficient in the testing methodology and to operate the soon to be acquired state-of-the art equipment required to conduct the testing.

The Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) unit within APHIS conducts risk-management and anti-smuggling activities to prevent the unlawful entry and distribution of prohibited agricultural commodities and products that might harbor harmful diseases. SITC has conducted special operations and, in cooperation with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (DHS-CBP) and other agencies, large scale inspection operations at ports of entry.

The program has dedicated four positions towards these efforts, and is planning to dedicate 28 additional positions in the near future. Thus far, SITC has surveyed over 2,000 domestic markets and seven importers, and contributed to seven interdictions of shipments with prohibited items.

The Investigation and Enforcement Services unit within APHIS provides support to other APHIS programs, DHS-CBP, and the State Departments of Agriculture to prevent the introduction and spread of AI. As a result of the enhanced prevention efforts related to HPAI, the program is hiring investigators to address the increased number of referrals. The program also is planning a national AI conference for July 2006 to train investigators and develop contingency plans to deploy personnel as needed in the event of an outbreak.

Wildlife Surveillance and Diagnostics

APHIS leads an interagency effort to detect HPAI H5N1 in wild birds. The initiative is divided into two phases. The initial phase addresses early detection activities in Alaska, particularly in coastal areas that have the most potential for contact among Asian and North American birds. The second phase addresses subsequent HPAI H5N1 detection activities in four major North American flyways. The plan for wild bird surveillance includes several interrelated components, including: the investigation of wild bird deaths or sickness; the sampling of live-captured birds; the deployment of sentinel species; environmental sampling; and sampling hunter-harvested birds. Over 30 cooperative agreements with State Wildlife Agencies are in process.

To date, APHIS has implemented a reporting system to answer calls and inquiries from the public regarding dead or sick wild birds. The toll-free number, 866-4 USDAWS, has been published on the USDA website (www.usda.gov/birdflu) to support public inquiries and help expedite calls. The calls are being tracked through an on-line system to monitor any potential increases in dead or sick bird reports.

APHIS is conducting AI surveillance in wild migratory birds in Alaska and ten other States. All the collected samples will be shipped to one of the more than 45 National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratories. The NAHLN coordinates the veterinary diagnostic laboratory capacity of State animal health laboratories and their extensive infrastructure -- facilities, equipment, and professional expertise.

WATERFOWL FLYWAYS OF NORTH AMERICA

USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) Avian Influenza Coordinated Agricultural Project (www.agnr.umd.edu/aicap) is contributing to the national surveillance of migratory birds for the presence of HPAI H5N1 in Alaska, California, Washington, and Utah. Approximately 7,100 birds will be tested, with all samples tested for HPAI, including H5N1, by the NAHLN.

The APHIS National Wildlife Research Center has begun processing environmental samples collected in Alaska. While Alaska started sampling in May, other states began collecting environmental samples in June. Additionally, USDA and the Department of the Interior have formed a trilateral working group with Canada and Mexico to collaborate on HPAI H5N1 surveillance in North America. This group will provide an effective channel of communication and information sharing on the status of AI in wild birds.

Research

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is working to develop better tools to provide to Federal, State, and local agencies for the control of AI. The ability to quickly control AI disease outbreaks is an important component to any successful disease containment program. ARS is working to enhance the ability to rapidly identify and accurately diagnose AI disease outbreaks, another important component for successful outbreak detection. Following are examples of ongoing research projects:

1. Methodology for environmental surveillance

Often it is difficult to capture wild birds and test for the presence of AI. ARS is developing tools that will allow the surveillance of the bird's environment (nesting grounds, feeding grounds, congregation areas, water) through the evaluation of feathers, feces, water, and nesting material for AI virus. This will allow action agencies to perform continuous monitoring for AI virus as wild waterfowl migrate. This technology, once validated, could then be applied to active surveillance of commercial poultry rearing operations as an early warning system for incursion of AI into the U.S. domestic poultry population.

2. Biosecurity against virus transmission between and within farms

Currently it is not fully understood how AI viruses circulate in nature (wild bird reservoirs), why these birds often do not get sick, and how the virus is then transmitted to domestic poultry and humans. If preventative measures are to be implemented and post-outbreak countermeasures deployed, scientists must discover how the virus exists in nature and how it is transmitted to poultry and people. ARS is conducting studies to discover methods of preventing domestic poultry from getting infected with AI and to prevent the spread of AI between farms.

3. *Research on improved vaccines and mass immunization*

Virus infection in the wild bird reservoir during a domestic HPAI H5N1 outbreak must be prevented if the outbreak is to be controlled. Spray vaccination of birds with an enhanced killed vaccine or a recombinant AI vaccine has been shown to be a potentially effective means of increasing the bird's resistance to infection and virus transmission.

Further work needs to be done on these vaccine technologies to evaluate alternative delivery routes and efficacy in an emergency situation. ARS will conduct research on developing and validating these vaccines to ensure that they can be distributed to domestic poultry or wild waterfowl before, during, or after an outbreak to help them build immunity and resistance to AI infection.

4. Complete genome sequencing of outbreak AI viruses

To date, few complete genomes of AI viruses have been fully sequenced. To be able to understand viral change, determine sequencing encoding virulence, and draw complete phylogenetic relationships, complete genome sequencing of outbreak and related AI viruses isolates must be completed. ARS will sequence genomes and then mine the sequence data for viral evolution, relationships, and determinants of virulence as well as identify diagnostic sequences and potential vaccine antigens.

Response and Coordination

The *National Avian Influenza Response Plan* has been developed to ensure that USDA is prepared to respond quickly and decisively when any surveillance system detects this or another serious poultry disease in this country. On May 2, 2006, USDA's *Draft Summary of the National Avian Influenza Response Plan* was posted on the APHIS website. Federal, State and industry leaders have reviewed the plan and are offering comments.

USDA's emergency operations centers are being fully utilized to coordinate efforts. There is a commitment to work side by side with Federal, State, and industry leaders to ensure the critical safeguarding programs funded through the supplemental appropriation for the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza are well coordinated. USDA's animal health officials are working under an incident command structure to maximize their communications, planning, and logistical capabilities.

Communications

Secretary Johanns and Health and Human Services Secretary Leavitt have done extensive interviews to educate the media and the public. Educating the media and the public about the complexities of AI as a disease among birds has been and continues to be USDA's primary communications focus. USDA's Office of Communications has used its AI supplemental funding to proactively develop communication products for the public and media.

USDA has:

- Jointly announced, with the Department of the Interior and the Department of Health and Human Services, the national interagency strategy for wild bird surveillance.

- Briefed television networks and national radio about USDA's communications strategy in the event of a highly pathogenic H5N1 detection. This media outreach campaign included an overview of expectations in the event of a detection including public notification, the role and responsibility of media when covering AI, and a discussion about what tools USDA can provide to the media to help them educate the public before and/or during an outbreak.

- Drafted and distributed extensive risk communications messages about HPAI H5N1. These messages cover questions ranging from USDA's preparedness and planned response to differences between the U.S. poultry industry and that, which exists in many countries currently affected by HPAI H5N1. These messages have been shared with Federal and State partners, as well as industry.

- Redesigned and updated a comprehensive brochure for the public entitled, "Avian Influenza: Protecting the United States. USDA Preparations and Response." This brochure focuses on USDA's efforts on many AI fronts: research, surveillance, response, and food safety. The first version of the brochure was distributed in English and Spanish.

- Produced television and radio public service announcements and distributed to stations throughout the nation. Agriculture Secretary Johanns and Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Richard Raymond recorded announcements, and a set of "average person" announcements were also produced in-house that feature a couple discussing safe poultry consumption. Secretary Johanns and Dr. Raymond also videotaped answers to frequently asked questions about AI and safe poultry preparation. Video illustrations of safe handling and cooking of poultry were included in the TV spots.

MEDIA USE OF USDA AVIAN INFLUENZA MATERIALS
(5/8/06 to 6/20/06)

Sec. Johanns PSA	345 airings
Video (USDA labs & proper cooking)	531 airings
Total	**876 airings**

- Developed and distributed digital video discs (DVDs) containing photographs as well as B-roll footage to the media of diagnostic testing laboratories in Ames, Iowa; food safety demonstrations; wildlife biologists capturing, testing and tracking movements of wild birds in Annapolis, Maryland, Fort Collins, Colorado and Barrow, Alaska. Video scenes also document sample testing by technicians at the USDA National Wildlife Research

Center. This material is continually updated as new video becomes available. Additional video scenes are being prepared in the event that AI enters the U.S. bird population.

- Developed a communications plan to be used in the event of a detection of AI that includes announcement materials, notification information, joint information center operations and duties, fact sheets, and other information.

- Made available information for the public about avian influenza on www.usda.gov/birdflu as well as on the U.S. government Web Site, www.pandemicflu.gov.

Associated Education and Outreach

APHIS planned an outreach and education campaign as part of an overall AI preparedness and response program that builds upon and expands the current "Biosecurity for the Birds" campaign. Specifically, the campaign will expand to target backyard poultry and pet bird owners, wildlife related groups, veterinarians, zoos, and the general public throughout the United States. The campaign also will promote best practices in both the live bird marketing system and backyard flocks in addition to its educational efforts of the U.S. commercial poultry industry.

As a result of a partnership with Future Farmers of America, over 60 chapters will be distributing "Biosecurity for the Birds" materials at county and state fairs throughout the year, and additional chapters are expected to sign up. APHIS is partnering with the Emergency and Community Health Outreach of Minneapolis, Minnesota, to produce a television program that will air twice on Minnesota public television (later this summer) in seven languages (six plus English) on AI and biosecurity practices. This program will be provided to other public television channels and other educational outlets in the future.

In April 2006, APHIS, States, and the poultry industry conducted an HPAI H5N1 workshop to coordinate national, state, and industry efforts in the event of an HPAI H5N1 detection or outbreak.

USDA has initiated planning for its employee safety and health and continuity of operations. Department-wide planning guidance and templates were developed to assist Headquarters and nation-wide field level supervisors define essential functions and services that would need to be maintained during a human pandemic. The templates also provided guidance for personnel responsible for facilities, guidance for managers on human relations issues and communications, planning for support to the National Response Plan, personal guidance for USDA employees and their family members, and test, training, and exercise programs to prepare for a human pandemic.

USDA plans to provide updates on its HPAI H5N1 efforts every six months or upon request from Congress.