

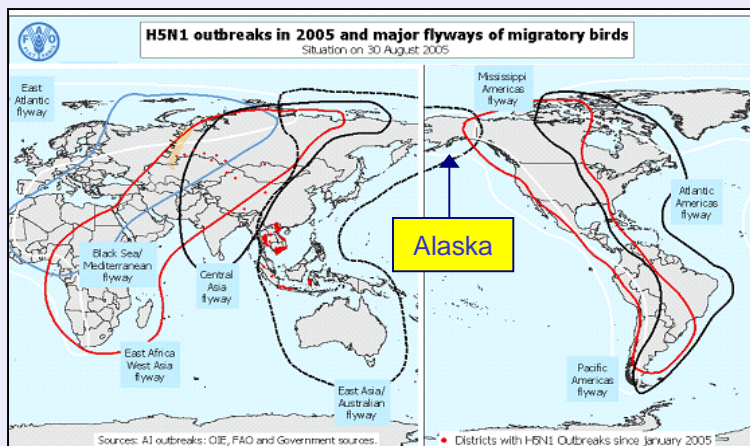
Pandemic Flu and You

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Spread of H5N1 Linked to Illegal Bird Trade

Highly pathogenic avian influenza A H5N1 (commonly known as “bird flu”) is of serious public health concern because it continues to cause poultry outbreaks and human infections—increasing the likelihood that it might eventually mutate into a pandemic strain. However, previous theory that the spread of H5N1 was due to migratory water fowl has not been supported. Instead, evidence now indicates that the spread of H5N1 is primarily due to the illegal bird trade and improper poultry raising techniques.



What does this shift from migratory birds to methods of poultry raising and the illegal bird trade mean?

Q: How was H5N1 previously believed to probably enter the US?

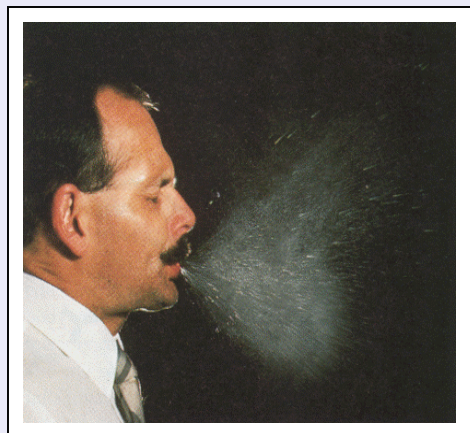
A: As shown above, it was previously assumed that the overlap of migratory patterns in Alaska, where Asian and North American birds mingle in the summer, would lead to the eventual introduction the virus into the US. However, after completion of a 7-year study of Alaskan waterfowl and examining the spread of H5N1 in other countries, officials now consider the likelihood of this occurring to be very low.

Q: What are US officials now doing to protect our nation from the introduction of H5N1?

A: The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has now shifted its focus to increasing and improving its anti-smuggling efforts. Posters to increase awareness are available at: http://www.cdc.gov/travel/other/avian_flu/keep_bird_flu_out.pdf. However, it is important to point out that even if highly pathogenic H5N1 is discovered in American wildlife, its impact likely would be very minimal and very different than what is occurring abroad because the US food supply is kept very separate from wild birds and because the risk of contracting H5N1 from wildlife is very low.

Q: Should people still report dead birds?

A: Yes. Although these reports are more important for other public health issues, not bird flu. Reports can be submitted by calling LA County Veterinary Public Health at 562-401-7088.



Evidence Supports Large Droplet Transmission

A rigorous review of research into influenza transmission published in the April 2007 issue of *The Lancet* (Brankston et al., pp. 257-265) has concluded that the flu virus is overwhelmingly transmitted at close quarters—a finding that discounts the likelihood of airborne transmission and could have important implications for pandemic planning. Researchers came to two conclusions. First, that despite more than 70 years' research, much of what is believed to be known about flu transmission is based on poorly structured studies or faulty interpretations of results. And second, that most evidence supports flu being acquired only within a short distance of an infected person—making it much more likely that the virus is transmitted by large respiratory droplets that fall out of the air within several feet, rather than by fine aerosols that can travel long distances and hang in the air for extended periods of time.

A summary abstract is available from *The Lancet* at:
<http://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473309907700294/abstract>