

## Auckland Regional Public Health Service

Rātonga Hauora ā Iwi o Tamaki Makaurau



Working with the people of Auckland, Counties Manukau and Waitemata

Current Alert Level: **WHITE** ([definition](#))  
Update number: 9  
Date: 14 February 2006  
Prepared by: [Dr Craig Thornley](#)  
Website: [www.arphs.govt.nz](http://www.arphs.govt.nz) (+ follow [link](#))

### Regional

Transfer of pandemic planning responsibilities in ARPHS. With the end of Bruce Macdonald's contract with ARPHS, and with Dr Will Paterson's imminent departure for Australia, pandemic planning responsibilities within ARPHS have been reallocated. Dr William Rainger will now chair the ARPHS Pandemic Planning Group and will be the ARPHS representative on the regional Health-CEG; the ARPHS technical advisor role for pandemic planning is now Dr Greg Simmons; and the ARPHS clinical lead for surveillance issues is being taken by Dr Craig Thornley. Dr Sheryl Jury continues to coordinate the ARPHS pandemic plan.

### International

H5N1 identified in birds in Nigeria [WHO, 08/01/06](#) and [CIDRAP, 09/01/06](#). H5N1 infection has killed about 40,000 poultry on a commercial farm in northern Nigeria, according to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). Tests performed by OIE in Italy on samples collected from the farm in Kaduna state have identified the same H5N1 strain found in Siberia and Mongolia in 2005. Large-scale poultry deaths in the neighbouring states of Kano and Plateau have also been attributed by the Nigerian agricultural ministry to H5N1, but this has not yet been verified by the OIE. Outbreak sites have been quarantined, and the OIE is sending teams to the area to assist control efforts. The arrival of H5N1 in Nigeria realises one of the worst fears of experts, who have long warned that the spread of the virus into Africa could greatly complicate containment efforts. Backyard poultry live in close contact with people in many parts of Africa.

### H5N1 enters the European Union [New York Times, 12/02/06](#).

The A(H5N1) virus is reported to have been identified in specimens collected from swans in southern Italy, northern Greece and near the Danube delta in Bulgaria, European officials announced on 11/02/06. The OIE reports that Italian and Bulgarian specimens have been confirmed by reference laboratories, but as yet no official report on the incursion in Greece has been posted on the [OIE website](#).

These are the first known incursions of H5N1 into the European Union. Dead swans have become an important flu sentinel because they are very susceptible to the virus and are so large that people notice when they die. The southern Italy swans are not migratory, but are present in wetlands that are along bird migration routes.

Authorities in the Netherlands and Germany have ordered poultry to be kept indoors from 01/03/06, and France has extended poultry containment measures.

[Links](#) to key pandemic planning sites NZ/worldwide

[Ministry of Education](#) pandemic planning site for schools and early childhood education services (updated 09/01/06)

[Emerging Infectious Diseases special issue on influenza \(January 2006\)](#)

Updated [CIDRAP-authored overviews of avian influenza implications for humans](#) and [agricultural and wildlife considerations](#) are available online.

# Pandemic Postings

**Global spread of avian influenza to date**  
Confirmed human cases of avian influenza A/(H5N1), to 6 February 2006,<sup>1</sup> and animal outbreaks of highly-pathogenic avian influenza A/H5, to 9 February 2006<sup>2</sup>

	Human <sup>1</sup> cases	deaths	Animal <sup>2</sup> outbreaks
Cambodia	4	4	15
China	10	7	80
Croatia	-	-	3
Hong Kong	-	-	5
Indonesia	23	16	246
Iraq	1	1	3
Japan	-	-	16
Kazakhstan	-	-	1
Korea (South)	-	-	19
Laos	-	-	1
Malaysia	-	-	10
Mongolia	-	-	2
Nigeria	-	-	1
Romania	-	-	39
Russia	-	-	62
Taiwan	-	-	2
Thailand	22	14	1164
Turkey	12	4	56
Ukraine	-	-	33
Vietnam	93	42	2315
TOTAL	165	88	4073

Notes:

1 As reported to [World Health Organization](#)

2 As reported to [World Organisation for Animal Health \(OIE\)](#)

### Background

**Multiple sublineages of H5N1 influenza virus established in Asia** [Proc Natl Acad Sci USA early online publication, 10/02/06 \(Chen et al\)](#). To help understand the temporal and spatial relationships between H5N1 incursions among birds across Asia, researchers have sequenced and compared H5N1 viruses isolated 2003-5 from poultry specimens from China, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia. The study demonstrates that the H5N1 virus has evolved into different subgroups that accord with different geographic regions in Southeast Asia: this suggests that the virus is being perpetuated through movement of poultry and poultry products and not reintroduced by migratory birds. Southern China is the most likely source for these viruses; control of the regional epidemic among poultry requires that this source be contained.

A news bulletin regarding this paper can be read at [CIDRAP, 10/02/06](#).

**Real-time laboratory test for A/H5 developed in US** [MMWR early online publication, 03/02/06](#). The US FDA has approved a CDC-developed Influenza A/H5 (Asian lineage) real-time PCR primer and probe set to help diagnose patients who may be infected with A/H5 influenza and to assist with surveillance. According to CDC officials (reported in [CIDRAP, 03/02/06](#)), the new test will enable preliminary detection of H5 in about 4 hours, compared to 2-3 days for other methods. The test yields a "presumptive not definitive positive", as it determines only the haemagglutinin (H) type of the virus, not the neuraminidase (N) type. Distribution of the test to US laboratories has commenced.