

Overview of Avian Influenza

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Avian influenza is a disease caused by infection of poultry with type A influenza viruses. The disease occurs worldwide, and all species of birds are thought to be susceptible to it. Although avian influenza A viruses rarely infect humans, since 1997, instances of human infection have occurred; some (outside the United States) have resulted in death. Most cases of avian influenza virus infection in humans are thought to have resulted from close contact with infected poultry or contacting contaminated surfaces. However, other means of transmission are possible, such as airborne material containing the virus entering a person's mouth, nose, or eyes, or being breathed into the lungs. This presentation will provide background information on avian influenza viruses and describe the potential for pandemic influenza. Recommendations concerning respiratory protection, eye protection, and the type of protective clothing needed to minimize exposures to the virus will be discussed.