

THE SECOND FRIDAY REPORT – #5 – May 11, 2007

A monthly newsletter update on local, state, national and worldwide events and happenings concerning Pandemic Influenza brought to you by the York/Adams Metropolitan Medical Response System (YAMMRS)

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1. Avian Influenza

There have been several recent **undocumented** reports of large poultry die-offs in several countries – countries that we already know have H5N1. The cause of these questionable die-offs appears to be still under investigation. Certainly there are many causes for bird die-offs, not just H5N1 Influenza virus. Let's wait and see.

There have not yet been any reports of high path H5N1 bird infections in the U.S. or the North American continent. As you may recall, it was predicted that our North American migrating birds would mix with infected Western European and Eastern Asian birds in the Arctic Circle last summer and then our birds might bring H5N1 south with them when they descended for this past winter. Apparently this didn't happen. And now the birds are getting ready to spend their summer in the Arctic Circle once again. I wonder what will happen this time?

2. Human A/H5N1 Influenza

Why do I feel uncomfortable when I check the WHO website for the most current worldwide report and there is no update about human cases of H5N1 Influenza since April 11th, which are the same numbers I published in last month's Report? Could it be there have been no human cases in the past month? Sure, anything is possible, but is that likely? Maybe my computer or the WHO website has stopped functioning properly. Wouldn't it be nice if there haven't been any new human cases in the past month?

We continue in the WHO's Phase 3, which means a new influenza virus (A/H5N1) causes human cases but there is no or very limited sustained human-to-human transmission. We have been in Phase 3 since January 2004.
(www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html)

3. Seasonal Influenza

Our regular flu season is basically over and it appears as though it might have been one of the mildest flu seasons on record. As I mentioned before, planning for next winter's flu season is well underway. Potential dates for our local Drive-Thru Program at the York Expo Center are near finalization. Reports from the Federal government and vaccine manufacturers are that we will have a record large amount of seasonal Flu vaccine for distribution and administration this fall and winter.

4. Other Items of Interest on Pandemic Influenza

Pandemic Influenza Workshop

What: Pandemic Influenza Workshop – sponsored by the South Central Office of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the York County Office of Emergency Management, and the Hanover Chapter of the American Red Cross. The purpose of this workshop is to promote pandemic influenza education and preparation in the local community.

Who: The general public and emergency responders are invited to attend.

When: May 16th, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Where: Emory H. Markle Intermediate School, 225 Bowman Rd., Hanover, Pa.

Additional Information: Refreshments will be provided. Additional workshops will be held in the future at other locations to be announced.

Contract: For more information or to register, call the Hanover Chapter of the American Red Cross at 717-637-3768.

HHS Issues Interim Guidance on Use of Facemasks and Respirators

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released on May 3, 2007, interim advice to the public about the use of facemasks and respirators in certain public (non-occupational) settings during an influenza pandemic. There is very little research about the value of masks to protect people in public settings. These interim recommendations are based on the best judgment of public health experts who relied in part on information about the protective value of masks in healthcare facilities. This guidance can be found at:

www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/maskguidancecommunity.html.

FDA Approves First U.S. Vaccine for Humans Against H5N1 Virus

This is the H5N1 virus vaccine highlighted in the March 9, 2007 Second Friday Report. A number of limitations of this vaccine were addressed. The vaccine will not be available for sale to the general public since the federal government is purchasing all the supplies and placing them in the government stockpile.

A final note from the Editor: Please let me know about items that you would like to share with others concerning Pandemic Influenza. Also, if you would like to hear about a particular Influenza topic, please feel free to contact me at dhawk@yorkcity.org. If others would like to be added to the mailing list for this Report, please forward email addresses to either me at the above email address or to Bernadette Lauer at bklauser@ycdes.org.