

Bird Flu and your family

March 6, 2006

In recent weeks there have been a number of reports of avian or bird flu in the media. Schlumberger employees and spouses alike have called or emailed Health and Safety representatives with questions and concerns. Schlumberger has created a *Bird Flu Response Plan* in order to work towards protecting employees and their families should the bird flu pandemic occur.

As of March 6, according to the World Health Organization, 175 cases of H5N1 virus have been confirmed in humans in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iraq, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam, causing 95 deaths. These have occurred over the past 8 years (since 1997).

In line with Schlumberger's Emergency Response Standards, worldwide guidelines together with a response plan template and an employee awareness training presentation package is available to employees. SSA Coordinators are encouraged to discuss this response plan with QHSE Representatives in their areas to find out if training needs to be made available to spouses in your Chapter.

The Bird Flu Response Plan identifies danger levels (escalation levels) as follows.

- **Level 0** — There are no human cases of bird flu in the country. Preparation is nevertheless required in order to be ready for escalation to Levels 1 and 2.
- **Level 1** — Bird flu cases in humans have been reported in the country but transmission is only from animals to humans. Preparations must intensify in order to be ready for escalation to Level 2. As of March 2006, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iraq, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam are at Level 1.
- **Level 2** — Human-to-human transmission has been reported in the country, therefore other cases will rapidly appear. The full Schlumberger bird flu response plan must be implemented. As of March 2006, no countries are at Level 2.

NB: As you can see, most countries across the world are currently at Level zero with some countries at Level 1 and no countries at Level 2.

About Bird Flu

What is bird flu?

Bird Flu is a viral infection caused by a strain of the H5N1 virus that is highly contagious among birds, and has infected chickens, ducks, and wild fowl. It is mainly transmitted from bird to bird, via saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. Transmission to humans has only been passed on so far from birds. Most of the cases have been reported in rural areas where bird flu has occurred because victims raised or handled birds. To date, no inter-human (person to person) transmission has occurred.

What are the symptoms of Bird flu?

Symptoms are like other forms of influenza (flu): fever, fatigue, muscle or joint pain, diarrhea, coughing, shortness of breath

Incubation period: 2 - 8 days maximum.

How can you protect yourself and your family?

- Get the seasonal flu vaccination (consult your doctor in the case on young children)
- Wash hands often with soap and hot water, especially before eating
- Ensure all chicken and eggs are well cooked (at least 83°C) to kill the virus
- Avoid contact with live chickens, ducks, and pigs (carriers) in rural areas, farms and markets

Ordinary face masks do NOT provide effective protection from the virus transmission.

What should you do if you have Bird Flu symptoms?

If you become ill with flu-like symptoms, seek medical attention. If you have recently returned from a trip to a location with confirmed cases of bird flu, remember to mention this to your doctor.

Tamiflu® or Relenza® are the currently preferred anti-virals, however these have become difficult to obtain.

Should we really worry about Bird flu?

Experts around the world are preparing for the possibility that the virus may mutate and be easily transmitted from person to person. If this were to happen, the disease could rapidly spread around the world, causing an influenza pandemic and high mortality rates. It is expected that governments would, in that case, curtail travel and would quarantine individuals suspected to be carrying the virus.

The BBC News [bird flu Web site \(http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/4531500.stm\)](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/4531500.stm) is an excellent source of further information.

Conclusion

There is a lot of information available – both fact and fiction – about Bird Flu. Follow basic steps of good hygiene and preventive measures as outlined and keep well informed (from reliable medical sources) about what is happening with the progression of this disease.

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