

## **BIRD FLU – The next instalment**

**January 2006**

Recent reports indicate that avian flu has now been identified in Turkey. This news obviously means that it is moving west towards Europe and has generated significant concerns in the popular press.

Current specialist advice remains as detailed in our previous communications on this subject and there has been no change. There are no increased risks with regards to travelling to Turkey at the present time unless individuals come into close contact with domestic poultry or handle poultry.

Avian flu remains an infection of birds. It is important to note that despite the number of birds affected across Asia, only a very small number of human beings have been infected. The number of total deaths worldwide so far from bird flu remains a fraction of the number of daily deaths worldwide from malaria each day of the year, or from malnutrition worldwide each day of the year.

It is also important to note that, to date, no tourists have been infected with avian flu anywhere in the world. The situation in Turkey is considered to be no worse than that in China, Indonesia, Vietnam or any of the other countries in which bird flu has been reported.

Most of the resorts in Turkey are in southern Turkey and are nowhere near the communities that have so far been affected.

Current specialist advice indicates that it is inevitable that bird flu will spread to other European countries as avian flu is a disease of migrating birds. Current reports indicate that all communities and employers must prepare for a further spread of bird flu as detailed in our previous communications.

The likelihood of there being a serious pandemic of the infection remains high. The longer that an outbreak continues amongst birds, the greater the opportunity for bird flu to change into a form that could spread amongst humans.

The main precautions that you may wish to provide for your employees remain as before.

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If an employee is travelling to a country where avian flu has been reported, they should avoid contact with live poultry and wild birds; they should not visit poultry farms, markets or eat raw or uncooked poultry.

It is important also to note airlines have the right to refuse to carry any passenger who displays symptoms of a temperature. During the SARS outbreak in 2003 many travellers found that they were not able to travel because they had symptoms of normal flu and were barred from travelling due to the fact that they had a temperature.

We at Preventative Healthcare will keep you updated as to further developments with regards to avian flu. Please be reassured that if there is any change to the current advice, we will provide an update. If you do not hear from Preventative Healthcare, but see a significant amount of coverage in the press to avian flu, this means that this is pure press speculation and there has been no change in the official specialist position.

If we can be of any further help or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us at [talk2us@phcohealth.co.uk](mailto:talk2us@phcohealth.co.uk).

