

Surveillance for Bird Flu Egg Sampling 9.13.05

Background

Avian influenza, or **bird flu**, is a disease of all birds. It can become an epidemic with the loss of essentially all birds. At the onset of the disease, birds have some respiratory signs. The virus mutates and becomes a great killer. More than 50 humans have died in several Asian countries from the H5 N1 strain of the virus. Over 120 million birds have died of bird flu or been destroyed to stop it from spreading. All of you may have read or heard the stories in the news media. Two articles that appeared in the Tacoma News Tribune last week are attached. As a gateway to Asia, the Pacific Northwest must be vigilant against a possible outbreak of deadly bird flu. There are two reasons to be on the outlook in our state. First, wild waterfowl act as a carrier of the virus and spread this infection to domestic birds. Second, many international flights from Asia enter the United States through Seattle. Both offer avenues of spread for the disease. In addition to the human health issues, the poultry industry has a farm gate value in excess of \$162 million alone. A lack of vigilance could prove deadly and the toll on human life could be enormous.

The Center of Disease Control (CDC), through local public health agencies, has provided funds for testing eggs to detect bird flu infection in Washington backyard birds. 4-H members and leaders involved in poultry projects have the opportunity to protect the residents of Washington and the poultry industry.

Request for Help

We are asking for your help in monitoring for bird flu. Please send a half dozen to one dozen eggs from each chicken, waterfowl or turkey flock. Place these eggs in an egg carton and place the carton in a small box. Crumple up some newspapers and place all around the egg carton(s) making sure the eggs do not break in transit. Eggs from a few neighbors can be placed in the same box. However, **please identify each sample with the name, address and telephone number of the poultry producer on each egg carton.** Please ask your neighbors and friends if they would like to participate. Be sure and identify each producer's eggs separately.

Shipping Instructions

Please mail these eggs to Dr. A. Singh Dhillon, Avian Health & Food Safety Laboratory (AHFSL), Washington State University, 7613 Pioneer Way East Puyallup, WA 98371. If you have questions, please telephone: (253) 445-4536, Fax: (253) 445-4544, or email : asdhillon@wsu.edu.

Use the following AHFSL Federal Express # 2165-3465-4 of AHFSL when shipping eggs. Call Federal Express toll free telephone number: 800-238-5355 and Federal

Express will pick up eggs from your home or office at no cost to you. AHFSL will test the eggs. The test results will be mailed to you upon request.

We appreciate your personal efforts for undertaking this task. This is an ideal way to detect this deadly virus at the earliest possible time and to help reduce the exposure to Washington residents.

Thank you very much for your help.

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