

IFAH Global: Position Paper on Avian Influenza

The **International Federation for Animal Health (IFAH Global)** is the international association representing companies engaged in the research, development, manufacturing and marketing of veterinary medicines including vaccines and other animal health products, which have been authorised according to strict regulatory standards, in both developed and developing countries throughout the world. <http://www.ifahsec.org>

Avian Influenza is a highly infectious viral disease which can affect all species of birds especially poultry, and is caused by influenza virus type A. IFAH is resolute in its determination to do all it can in helping to control Avian Influenza in domestic poultry, in partnership with government authorities and other organizations, thereby helping to prevent the emergence of a pandemic in man. The Federation continues to use its collective expertise to provide continuous and updated information on Avian Influenza: <http://www.ifahsec.org/topics/topics.htm> - "combating avian flu"

Avian Influenza occurs throughout the world and in its mild (low pathogenic) form often goes unnoticed with few symptoms and is therefore of lesser consequence. In the highly pathogenic and severe form however, it is characterized by a sudden onset with high mortality in infected birds. It is this form that presents one of the greatest risks to human health with its potential for transfer to man either directly or through an intermediate animal host, causing serious illness and sometimes death, as reported in several Asian countries following outbreaks in domestic poultry flocks.

For more information on Avian Influenza refer to:

- http://www.oie.int/eng/info/en_influenza.htm (OIE - world organisation of Animal Health)
- http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html (WHO – World Health Organisation)
- http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/subjects/en/health/diseases-cards/special_avian.html (FAO - Food and Agricultural Organisation)

There are 3 main pillars to the campaign to control, prevent and ultimately eradicate Avian Influenza in poultry:

- **Surveillance and bio-security** to prevent the spread of an outbreak from infected birds and minimize the risk of introduction to an uninfected flock by sanitary measures targeted at animals and people and the material that both come into contact with;
- **Stamping Out** the disease by culling all birds in an infected area and the incineration and/or burial of culled birds as well as their products;

- **Vaccination** with one of the many vaccines available, authorized to strict regulatory requirements according to the criteria of Quality, Safety and Efficacy, and used according to the vaccination guidelines from the World Association for Animal Health (OIE).

IFAH supports the view that the decision to use vaccination in any situation to manage this disease rests entirely with the authorities in the territories and countries concerned according to the strategic recommendations of OIE terrestrial code http://www.oie.int/eng/normes/en_mcode.htm and the FAO Global Strategy for AI: http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload//210745/Glo_pro_HPAI_oct05_en.pdf.

It is of critical importance however, that authorities have a preparedness policy so that vaccine capacity is available to meet demand when it is needed.

IFAH companies employ scientists with the necessary expertise in drug development to bring new and innovative vaccines to the market place, and consequently the Federation is working closely with regulatory authorities in many countries and with international organisations such as OIE, WHO and FAO to share that expertise. IFAH has actively participated in the drafting of Vaccination Guidelines with the OIE¹.

Collaboration is taking place on many fronts including discussion on the possibility of manufacturing facilities for veterinary vaccines being used for production of human influenza vaccines in preparation for the possible emergence of a human pandemic. IFAH is working with the WHO and the human pharmaceutical industry to put contingency plans in place to be ready for such an eventuality. Although IFAH companies may be able to assist in the manufacture of antigens for human vaccines, support for the manufacture of finished product is unlikely because of significant differences in the down stream processing activities in the production of animal and human types of vaccines.

Regarding possible concern about the safety of meat or eggs derived from poultry that might be infected with Avian Influenza, IFAH fully supports the position of the various authorities which have given reassurances that as long as meat and eggs are cooked properly the risk of cross infection to man from infected birds is minimal. There should be no concern whatsoever about the safety of meat and eggs from vaccinated birds any more than there should be concerning the safety of any food products from any vaccinated animal. Strict surveillance and bio-security measures, the use of poultry vaccines as well as proper processing of meat and eggs all contribute to minimizing the risk of cross infection to man.

(Approved 12 October 2006)

¹ These OIE guidelines have not yet been finalised (as of 12 October 2006)