

Alabama Department of Public Health-Health Alert Network (HAN)
Guidance for Alabama Providers Regarding Testing of Responders and Persons Exposed to Birds
Infected with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza 3/10/2017

Background:

- On March 3, a commercial chicken facility in Lincoln County, Tennessee alerted the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to an increase in chicken deaths. Testing at state and federal laboratories confirmed the presence of H7 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in samples from that flock.
- Two Alabama Counties (Madison and Limestone) have flocks within a 10 kilometer radius of the area with the infected birds. The Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries (AAI) is surveying and testing birds from within the area. At this time, there are no positive or infected birds in Alabama including other counties routinely testing for avian influenza.

Guidance:

- The risk of human infection with avian influenza during poultry outbreaks is very low. However, out of an abundance of caution, the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) is working to address concerns about the health of individuals who are working on site or had contact with affected birds.
- CDC states that human cases remain very infrequent and occur after unprotected contact with infected birds or surfaces contaminated with virus. Handling or consuming properly cooked poultry is not a risk factor for avian influenza. Person-to-person transmission is very rare and occurs only in a limited and non-sustained way.
- We request providers contact ADPH Infectious Diseases & Outbreaks Division (ID&O) at 1-800-338-8374 if a responder or person exposed to infected birds presents to their office with illness.
- We recognize that H7 HPAI response activities are occurring during the time of year when respiratory pathogens commonly circulate.
- We recommend a low threshold for testing responders or persons exposed to birds infected with H7 HPAI viruses or virus-contaminated environments.

Specimen Collection and Testing:

- Alabama Providers should collect specimens for testing by the Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL). Acceptable specimens include: (i) a nasopharyngeal swab, or (ii) a nasal aspirate or wash, or (iii) two swabs combined into one viral transport media vial (e.g., nasal or nasopharyngeal swab combined with an oropharyngeal swab)
- Complete a BCL Requisition Form for each specimen and test ordered http://www.adph.org/bcl/assets/BCL_Requisition_Form.pdf.
- Preferred transport media includes: Viral Transport Media (VTM), Universal Transport Media (UTM), M4, and M5.
- Specimens should be dropped off at your local county health department to be couriered to BCL overnight. Be sure to coordinate with ID&O prior to drop off (1-800-338-8374).
- If you have a question about specimen collection and shipping, call BCL at 334-260-3400.