



U.S. Embassy Almaty  
Consular Section  
Information Message



## **Avian Flu Fact Sheet**

**December 29, 2005**

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

### **AVIAN INFLUENZA FACT SHEET**

This Fact Sheet alerts Americans to the Department of State's preparedness efforts with respect to a possible avian influenza pandemic. The Department of State emphasizes that, in the event of a pandemic, its ability to assist Americans traveling and residing abroad may be severely limited due to restrictions on local and international movement imposed for public health reasons. Furthermore, American citizens should take note that the Department of State cannot provide Americans traveling or living abroad with medications, including in the event of a pandemic.

#### **Background – H5N1 Avian Influenza**

A number of countries in Asia and Europe have reported cases of avian influenza, commonly referred to as "bird flu" in their domestic and wild bird populations. The H5N1 strain of influenza causes severe disease in domesticated fowl. In addition, there are confirmed cases of bird-to-human transmissions of avian influenza in the South East Asia region, many of which have resulted in death. Please visit the World Health Organization (WHO) website, [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/country/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/en/) for the most up to date information on the countries affected and the number of deaths.

The vast majority of the known human cases have resulted from direct contact with poultry, and there is only limited evidence to suggest possible human-to-human transmission. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the WHO, and the Department of State are nonetheless concerned about the potential for human-to-human transmission of this highly dangerous flu strain, and are working closely with other partners in an effort to monitor the outbreak.

Concerns about the possibility of an avian influenza pandemic have prompted international and national efforts to institute pandemic preparedness measures. Information on the U.S. Government's overall response and efforts is available at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

### **Travel and Avian Influenza**

The Department of State, the CDC and the WHO have not issued any travel alerts or warnings for avian flu-infected areas. However, the CDC advises travelers to countries with documented H5N1 outbreaks to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces or fluids from poultry or other animals. American citizens traveling to or living in countries where avian influenza is prevalent should consider the potential risks and keep informed of the latest medical guidance and information in order to make appropriate plans. Specific CDC travel information relating to avian influenza, including preventive measures, is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm>. WHO guidance related to avian influenza is available at [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/).

Additional, general country information can be obtained from the Department of State's Consular Information Sheets at <http://travel.state.gov> and from the Department of State's toll-free number, 1-888-407-4747, or if calling from overseas, 202-501-4444.

### **Prevention, Response and Treatment – Take Charge of Your Plans**

A specific vaccine for humans that is effective in preventing avian influenza is not yet readily available. Based upon limited data, the CDC has suggested that the anti-viral medication Oseltamivir (brand name-Tamiflu) may be effective in treating avian influenza. Using this input, the Department of State has decided to pre-position the drug Tamiflu at its Embassies and Consulates worldwide, for eligible U.S. Government employees and their families serving abroad who become ill with avian influenza. We emphasize that this medication cannot be made available to private U.S. citizens abroad. Because of this, and because Tamiflu may not be readily available overseas, the State Department encourages American citizens traveling or living abroad to consult with their private physician about obtaining Tamiflu prior to travel, or whether Tamiflu is readily available in the country where they reside. Americans should also be aware of the potential health risk posed by counterfeit drugs, including those represented as Tamiflu, by internet scam artists or in countries with lax regulations governing the production and distribution of pharmaceuticals. In addition, the Department of State has asked its embassies and consulates to consider preparedness measures that take into consideration the fact that travel into or out of a country may not be possible, safe or medically advisable. Guidance on how private citizens can prepare for a “stay in place” response, including stockpiling food, water, and medical supplies, is available on the CDC and [pandemicflu.gov](http://pandemicflu.gov) websites.

It is also likely that governments will respond to a pandemic by imposing public health measures that restrict domestic and international movement, further limiting the U.S. Government's ability to assist Americans in these countries.

Americans who are planning travel to a country that has reported the virus or who are concerned about the Avian flu are advised to monitor the CDC and the WHO web sites for the latest information.

Additional country information can be obtained from the Department of State's Consular Information Sheets at <http://travel.state.gov> and from the Department of State's toll-free number, 1-888-407-4747, or if calling from overseas, 202-501-4444.

**CDC Contact Information:**

Public Inquiries:

English (888) 246-2675

Spanish (888) 246-2857

TTY (866) 874-2646

Mon-Fri 8am-11pm EST

Sat-Sun 10am-8pm EST

Address:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd.

Atlanta, GA 30333

USA (404) 639-3311

WHO Liaison Office in Washington, DC

Contact Information:

Telephone: (202) 974-3787

Facsimile: (202) 974-3789

Address:

WHO Liaison Office

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