



## Indiana State Department of Health

Dear State Employee:

There has been a significant amount of interest in avian influenza recently. From increased media coverage to an upcoming made-for-TV movie, the topic has become increasingly popular across the nation. Unfortunately, this interest has generated some confusion and even some misinformation. This message is intended to clarify some of that information and answer questions you may have. In turn, you can share this important information with your fellow citizens.

Avian influenza, also known as Bird Flu, is a disease of birds that can occasionally affect people. However, it is extremely important to note that avian influenza is **NOT** the same thing as a human influenza pandemic, and any report of avian influenza in the U.S. or elsewhere in North America would **NOT** signal the start of a human influenza pandemic.

While it is possible that humans could contract a form of avian influenza through close contact with a bird, a human pandemic would be the result of a new strain of influenza that can be efficiently transmitted human to human. Experts say a form of avian influenza could potentially mutate into a strain of influenza that can be transmitted human to human, but there is currently **NO** evidence of any such mutation involving the strain of avian influenza that has been reported recently in Asia, Africa and Europe.

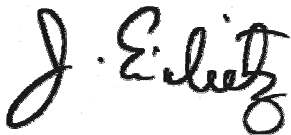
Another fact worth noting is that U.S. commercial poultry is produced and inspected at the highest standards in the world and avian influenza does **NOT** present a significant risk to the safety of the domestic poultry and egg supply. You should also know that pro-active steps are being taken to monitor the risk of avian influenza in the U.S. Surveillance of wild and domestic birds is underway nationally, including here in Indiana.

While there is no evidence right now of an imminent human influenza pandemic, experts have been warning about this possibility. Indiana is aggressively preparing for such an event. The recent Pandemic Influenza State Summit at Purdue University brought together officials from both the public and private sectors to discuss steps that could be taken to minimize the impact of any future pandemic. Also, state agencies are working hard to develop “Continuity of Operations” and “Continuity of Government” plans to make sure that essential services will still be provided during a pandemic.

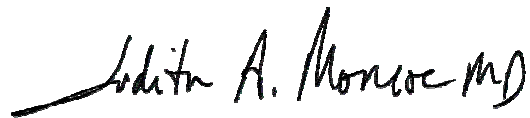
Meanwhile, you can personally take steps now to prepare yourself and your family. If you haven’t done so already, assemble an emergency supplies kit in case a pandemic results in requests or orders to “shelter in place.” Above all, practice good “respiratory hygiene” habits at all times. Washing hands frequently and thoroughly, covering your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough, and staying home from work or school when feeling ill are all steps that can prevent the spread of any respiratory disease, and will be especially crucial if an influenza pandemic were to occur.

While scenes of a killer bird flu wreaking havoc in the streets of America might make for good entertainment to some, it is important to also be educated and know the facts about these threats. A well-educated citizenry will be a critically important part of an efficient and effective response to any event.

Thank you for taking time to read this message and for your service to the State of Indiana.



J. Eric Dietz, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Indiana Department of Homeland Security



Judith A. Monroe, M.D.  
State Health Commissioner