



National Centre for Biosecurity and Infectious Disease

Information Sheet for Farmers

Cohort Study 2007

Surveillance Research

Researchers from the National Centre for Biosecurity and Infectious Disease are undertaking a research project into avian influenza viruses in backyard poultry flocks.

The study is being undertaken in two parts over two years. The first part focuses on poultry in backyard flocks. The second part focuses on people living on the farms.

Where will the research be undertaken?

The researchers want to recruit participants from farms/lifestyle blocks with backyard flocks of domestic poultry near the mouth of the Kaituna river (Bay of Plenty region) and in the vicinity of Lake Wairarapa (Wellington region)

These areas have been chosen because they are sites with waterways where wild birds congregate.

Who can participate?

- People who live on farms/lifestyle blocks including all those living in their household
- and their backyard flocks (chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese etc)

When will the research take place?

Spring 2006 - Spring 2007

Taking Part

It is entirely your choice as to whether you and your family wish to take part in the study. You or members of your family may withdraw from the study at any time. This will in no way change how you will be treated in the future.

What will be involved for farmers and households?

You will be asked for written, informed consent to participate in the study. Participants will be given an information sheet. If you have any further questions you can contact the research staff listed at the end of this information sheet. Parents or guardians of children younger than 16 years of age will also be asked to provide consent for their children's participation

- Participating households will be visited at home 7-8 times by the researchers. Each visit will take 15-60 minutes.
- At the first visit, a senior household member will be asked to complete a questionnaire, which includes questions about your farm and farming practices.

- Flocks will have blood and swab samples taken every one or two months for twelve months to look for avian influenza viruses or evidence of being in contact with these viruses.
- In Jan-March 2007 household members will be asked for up to three throat swabs or throat gargle specimens to look for the same viruses that may be circulating amongst your poultry. In addition, a once only blood test (a 5ml blood sample or about one teaspoonful) is to be collected by a trained nurse during March to April 2007. A local anaesthetic cream (Emla®) can be applied to the skin of young children to reduce any pain or discomfort from the blood collection).
- Once the blood sample has been collected, household individuals will be asked questions about their health and the type of contact they have with poultry.

How frequently will sampling be needed for people?

Between Jan to March 2007, two to three throat swabs (or gargles) will also be needed for all members of the household.

In March-April 2007, one blood sample will be collected.

What will be involved for backyard flocks?

Randomly selected birds (chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese etc) will have one blood, respiratory and faecal sample collected every one or two months

What will happen to the samples?

The human blood and respiratory samples will go to the National Influenza Centre at ESR (Kenepuru). The animal blood and swab samples will go to the Investigation and Diagnostic Centre and to AgResearch in Wallaceville (Upper Hutt). There the blood will be tested for signs of contact with avian influenza viruses and the respiratory samples will be tested for the presence of these viruses. The samples are stored in a freezer for as long as 10 years before being destroyed. Each sample is stored under a special code that does not allow you or other study participants to be identified.

Information Sheet for Farmers Cohort Study 2007 continued

What are the benefits of taking part?

- Knowing whether you, your family, other household members or farm workers have been exposed to the avian influenza viruses.
- Improved understanding of avian influenza viruses, and access to specialists who can answer questions about the animal and human health aspects of the viruses.
- Reduce risks to individuals working closely with birds through the provision of information and advice on improving farm biosecurity practices.
- Assisting and understanding whether avian influenza is a potential risk to New Zealand farmers and poultry keepers.
- Personal satisfaction of assisting with research that helps New Zealand to contribute to the global understanding of avian influenza viruses.

Are there any costs?

There is no cost to you or household members for taking part in the study.

What happens if a virus is found in poultry?

Avian influenza (AI) viruses are naturally present in healthy wild birds, especially waterfowl (ducks and geese). To date all AI viruses identified in New Zealand have been low pathogenicity benign (harmless) viruses found in healthy mallard ducks. It is therefore most likely that any AI viruses found as part of this research, will be a benign virus which would not cause illness in poultry, wild birds or humans. Any such findings will be notified to study participants and fully explained by a veterinarian.

New Zealand is part of a global network for animal disease surveillance and must report the finding of avian influenza H5 and H7 subtypes (these are called notifiable avian influenza viruses) to world animal health bodies. If notifiable AI viruses are found as part of this research project, a follow up investigation will be required to confirm the findings. In this situation you will be contacted by a Biosecurity New Zealand veterinary investigator who will discuss the situation with you and arrange to visit your property to carry out further testing.

In the event of an outbreak of avian influenza in New Zealand Biosecurity New Zealand would respond under the Biosecurity Act in accordance with its Technical Response Policies for Avian Influenza Viruses of Regulatory Concern. A response to low pathogenicity notifiable avian influenza (LPNAI) will be measured, because LPNAI is not an immediate concern because it is not a human health risk.

What happens if a virus is found in a human throat sample?

New Zealand does not currently have any human illness caused by avian influenza viruses. If a virus is found in a human sample it is likely to be benign i.e. it won't cause illness in humans.

Researchers will inform you of the findings via your GP. Your medical history will be reviewed for the period when the specimen was taken and any appropriate medical action would be undertaken. Medical investigators would work closely with your GP to ensure the correct clinical management and a clear understanding of the test results.

What happens if a test on a human blood sample is positive?

The test in the cohort study on a human blood sample is to detect whether human antibodies against an avian influenza virus are present. If your test result is positive, it indicates that you have been in contact with the virus previously and gained immunity from it. Medical investigators will inform you of the findings and will work closely with your GP to ensure a clear understanding of the test results.

What happens to test results?

A medical specialist on the research team will discuss the test results with you and/or your GP. Your individual results are kept confidential and will only be provided to you or those who you wish to receive them.

The overall results of the research project will be published in medical and veterinary journals and made available to the local community.

How is my privacy maintained?

No material that could personally identify you will be used in any reports about this study. The records are stored in a locked filing cabinet and in a computer using a password. Both these storage systems are in a locked office and used only by researchers working on this study.

Ethics

This study has ethical approval from the National Multi-centre Human Ethics Committee and the Wallaceville Animal Ethics committee.

Further Questions

If you have any queries or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may wish to contact a Health and Disability Advocate Telephone:
Mid and lower North Island 0800 42 36 38 (4 ADNET)

You may contact the researchers at any time to ask about anything you may not understand

Medical investigators:

Drs. Bruce Adlam/Sue Huang	04 914 0700
Professor Keith Grimwood	04 385 5999
Dr. Michael Baker	04 385 5541

Veterinary investigators:

Dr. Tao Zheng	04 529 0300
Drs. Tom Rawdon/Wlodek Stanislawek/Susan Cork/Joseph O'Keefe	04 526 5600

For more information on avian influenza visit www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pest-and-disease-response/pests-and-diseases-watchlist/bird-flu

Compensation

If a virus of regulatory concern is identified in poultry during the NCBID Avian Influenza project Biosecurity New Zealand would respond under the Biosecurity Act in accordance with its Technical Response Policies for Avian Influenza Viruses of Regulatory Concern and the supporting Technical Analysis for Notifiable Avian Influenza.

Compensation is payable where loss has been suffered as a result of a direction under the Biosecurity Act. Eligibility for compensation arises through the exercise of powers under the Biosecurity Act where damage or loss is caused by the exercise of those powers. Compensation is not payable simply because animals are detected with disease. The compensation is of such an amount that the person to whom it is paid will be no better or worse off than any person whose property or goods are not directly affected by the exercising of powers under the Biosecurity Act. The amount claimed must be verifiable and the loss be a result of damage to or destruction of a person's property; or the result of restrictions imposed under the Biosecurity Act on the movement or disposal of a person's goods. Claims must be forwarded to MAF and are assessed individually by MAF against the criteria in the Biosecurity Act from a point when the compensable loss has occurred and been documented. For further information please contact www.biosecurity.govt.nz/strategy-and-consultation/strategy/compensation.htm