

Infection Protection for Workers in Environments that Present a Risk of AI Exposure

Note: When zoonosis is a concern (e.g., with HPAI), the RI Department of Health will lend support. In particular, HEALTH will help assess and minimize risks of infection among DEM emergency responders and the public. See [DEM-HEALTH MOU Concerning HPAI](#) (6-9-AI-MOU01 in the DEM ERP).

See also:

“Safety and Health,” Section 7 of the DEM Emergency Response Plan ([DEM ERP](http://www.dem.ri.gov/topics/erp.htm) <<http://www.dem.ri.gov/topics/erp.htm>>) and on-line resources linked below.

To promote on-the-job health and safety, DEM will provide staff with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and the following guidelines for protection from infection in environments that present a risk of exposure to avian influenza virus (AI or “bird flu”).

Note that the following are **minimum** protective measures. They should be adapted and applied in light of an initial assessment and then monitoring of the exposure risks for particular kinds of workers or tasks.

1. All persons who have been in close contact with infected animals or with contaminated surfaces, or who have just removed gloves, should wash their hands frequently. Hand hygiene should consist of washing with soap and water for 15-20 seconds or using other standard hand-disinfection procedures as specified by state government, industry, or USDA outbreak-response guidelines.
2. While handling animals, do not rub eyes, eat, drink, or smoke.
3. All workers involved in the culling, transport, or disposal of avian influenza-infected poultry should use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), as explained in [DEM ERP](#), Sections 7B and 7D. Appropriate PPE will include at least the following:
 - Protective clothing capable of being disinfected or disposed, preferably coveralls (such as a Tyvek suit) plus an impermeable apron or surgical gowns with long cuffed sleeves plus an impermeable apron.
 - Gloves capable of being disinfected or disposed; gloves should be carefully removed and discarded or disinfected and hands should be cleaned.
 - Respirators: the minimum recommendation is a disposable particulate respirator (e.g. N95, N99 or N100) used as part of a comprehensive respiratory protection program. (The elements of such a program are described in [29 CFR 1910.134](#) and detailed for DEM in [DEM ERP](#), Section 7D.) Use of any respirator (e.g., whether N95, half- or full-face mask), requires prior medical evaluation and fit testing. (DEM protocols and forms are in [DEM ERP](#), Section 7D2 and 7D3.)

- Goggles.
 - Boots or protective foot covers that can be disinfected or disposed.
4. Environmental clean up should be carried out in areas of culling, using the same protective measures as above.
 5. When considering vaccinations or antiviral medications, DEM recommends that employees consult their primary care physicians. Note that OSHA, WHO and CDC advise people who work in some AI-related conditions to receive the current season's influenza vaccination and antiviral drugs. (See sources listed below.)
 6. Potentially exposed workers should monitor their health for the development of fever, respiratory symptoms, and/or conjunctivitis (i.e., eye infections) for 1 week after last exposure to avian influenza-infected or exposed birds or to potentially avian influenza-contaminated environmental surfaces. Individuals who become ill should seek medical care and, prior to arrival, notify their health care provider that they may have been exposed to avian influenza.

SOURCES:

- Rhode Island Department of Health, "[Influenza \(Flu\) Information](http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/index.php)" <<http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/index.php>>; and "[Influenza \(Flu\): Avian](http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/avian_han186.php)" <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/avian_han186.php> (2006)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Veterinary Services Unit of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), "Operation Guidelines: [Personal Protective Equipment in Biologically Hazardous Environments](#)," National Animal Health Emergency Management System (NAHEMS), (DRAFT 2002).
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "[Interim Guidance for Protection of Persons Involved in U.S. Avian Influenza Outbreak Disease Control and Eradication Activities](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/professional/protect-guid.htm)" <<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/professional/protect-guid.htm>> (February 17, 2004).
- U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), "[Guidance for Protecting Workers Against Avian Flu](http://www.osha.gov/dsg/guidance/avian-flu.html)" <<http://www.osha.gov/dsg/guidance/avian-flu.html>> (2005).
- U.S. Geological Survey, National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC), "[Interim Guidelines for the Protection of Persons Handling Wild Birds With Reference to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1](http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/research/WHB/WHB_05_03.html)" <http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/research/WHB/WHB_05_03.html> (August 23, 2005).
- World Health Organization (WHO), "Protection of Persons at Risk of Occupational Exposure," in "[WHO Guidance On Public Health Measures in Countries Experiencing Their First Outbreaks of H5N1 Avian Influenza](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/guidelines/firstoutbreak/en/index.html)" <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/guidelines/firstoutbreak/en/index.html> (October 2005).