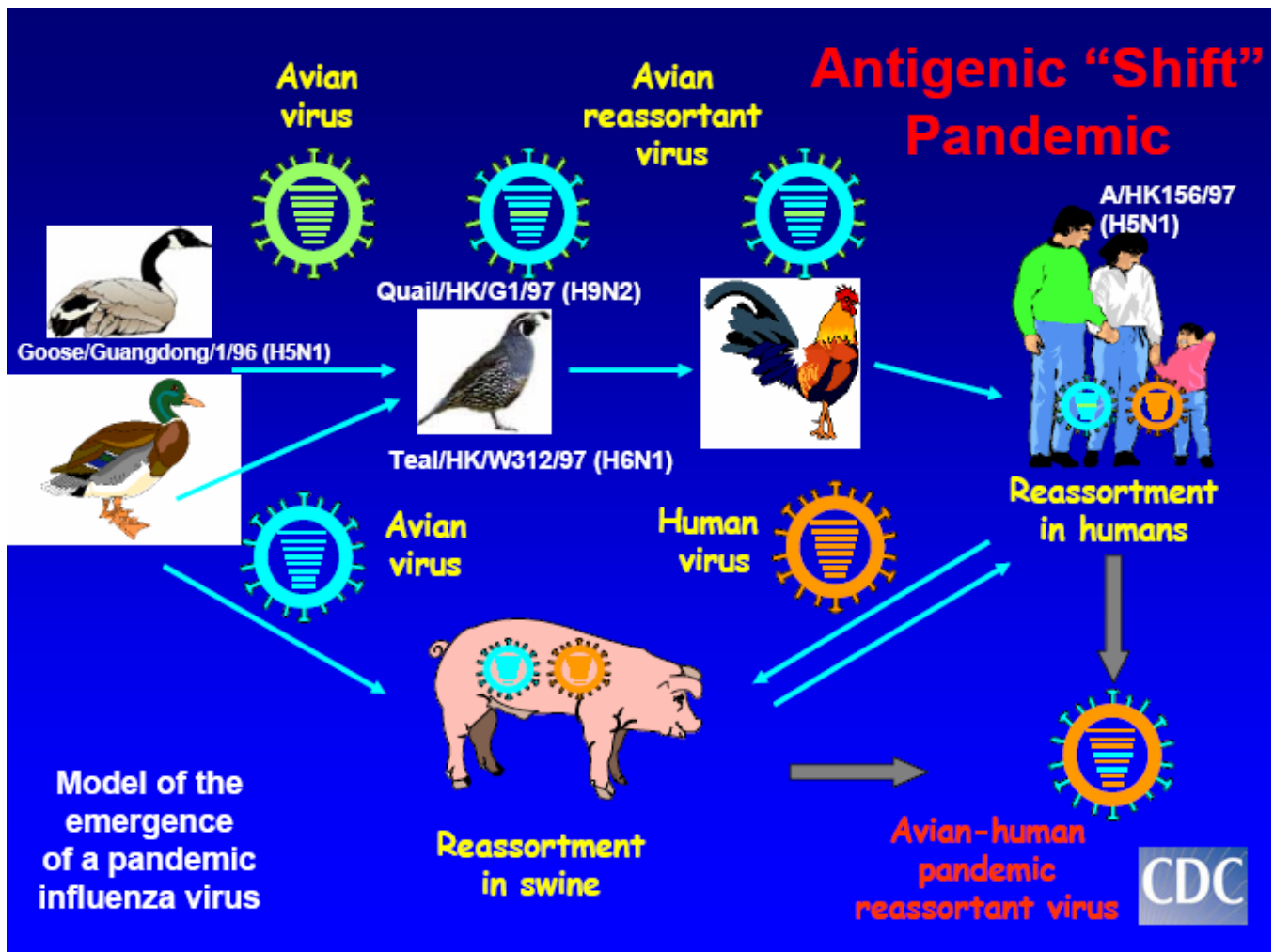


The Animal Hazards Program of the Campus Health Service is pleased to offer the 2006-2007 “Flu Vaccine” to all Animal Hazard’s Program participants who work with Poultry or birds of any kind. The vaccine is free of charge to the employee. (This is the regular vaccine offered for this flu season and does not need to be repeated if you have already had a flu shot in Fall 2006 or Spring 2007.)



The diagram above illustrates the relationship between Avian viruses and human “Avian Influenza.” Currently available “Flu vaccines” do not directly protect humans from acquiring Avian Influenza. However, individuals that work with birds could acquire both the Avian flu and the Human flu, concurrently. The result could be potentially life threatening AND, the affected individual could become a human incubator offering the two viruses the opportunity to combine in to a new, devastating human influenza.

We have borrowed the British ‘National Health Service’ Q & A Brochure for you to review:

Flu immunisation programme for people who work in close contact with poultry

The Department of Health is offering free flu vaccination this winter to all those who work in close contact with poultry. This is being done as a precautionary public health measure and does not mean that workers are at any higher risk of getting flu this winter than usual. Nor does it mean that there is an increased risk of an outbreak of bird flu in the UK as this risk remains low. Nevertheless, experts have recommended that this precautionary measure be taken now for the reasons set out below.

Why are workers being offered a flu vaccine?

Working in close contact with poultry means that there is a slight risk that workers could catch the bird flu virus if an outbreak of bird flu were to occur. If they were also infected with human flu at the same time, the bird and human flu viruses could mix in their body to make a new flu virus. A new flu virus produced in this way could potentially be very infectious and cause serious illness in other people as they would not have any immunity to a new virus. Flu vaccine is being offered to eliminate this slight risk of having both flu and bird flu at the same time.

Does flu vaccine protect against bird flu?

No. Flu vaccine will not protect against bird flu.

What is the risk of a new flu virus emerging?

We do not know. We do know that flu viruses readily mix and change to produce new viruses but we do not know to what extent this happens between bird and human flu viruses.

The Department of Health already has a policy to offer flu vaccine to all those exposed to bird flu when an outbreak occurs. Having people who work with poultry vaccinated ahead of any outbreak will provide an extra safeguard.

Is it compulsory for poultry workers to be vaccinated?

No. It is being offered free of charge and will help protect workers from catching and spreading ordinary human flu.

When can workers have the flu vaccine?

Now, unless they are unwell and have a high temperature (39°C and above), in which case they should wait until they feel better.

If workers have already had a flu jab this winter, it is not necessary to have another one until next autumn. Flu vaccines are changed each year to keep them effective against the viruses that circulate naturally. But if they have already had flu this winter they will still need the vaccine because there are these different types of flu viruses.

Can the flu vaccine cause flu?

No, it cannot cause flu.

Will there be any side effects?

Some people get a slight temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days afterwards, and the arm may feel a bit sore where it has been injected. These slight effects do not indicate any infection with flu. Any other reactions are very rare.

People should not be vaccinated if they:

- are allergic to hens' eggs
- have had a severe reaction to flu vaccine in the past
- are currently unwell. They can have the vaccine when they are better
- have already had a flu jab this winter – but should have it again next winter.

Key facts about bird flu

- Bird flu is primarily a disease of birds caused by flu viruses
- There are many different types of bird flu viruses and each differs in its ability to cause disease in birds and people
- People can become infected through close contact with diseased poultry. However, infection in people is rare even in those who are directly exposed to the virus because the virus does not pass easily from birds to people
- The symptoms of bird flu in a person are usually mild flu-like symptoms and mild conjunctivitis (sore eyes with a discharge). Bird flu virus type H5N1 seems to differ from other bird flu types in its ability to cause serious illness with a high death rate in people. To date, there have been no human cases of H5N1 in the UK
- Bird flu can be treated with an antiviral medicine

Can pregnant women have the vaccine?

There is no evidence of risk from vaccinating pregnant women, or those who are breast-feeding, with flu vaccine but they should mention that they are pregnant when making the appointment.

How can people avoid getting bird flu?

Remember, the flu vaccine does not protect against bird flu.

The slight risk of becoming infected can be reduced by following health and safety guidance for working with poultry and by making sure simple hygiene measures whilst at work are followed. More advice is available on the Department for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs website www.defra.gov.uk or Health and Safety Executive website www.hse.gov.uk.

If you have any queries please call NHS Direct on 0845 4647* or visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Therefore, we encourage you to avail yourself of the opportunity to protect you, your family and co-workers while taking an important step away from potentially propagating this potential killer of millions. As for the pig in the top diagram, yes, pigs can transmit this disease to humans, at least, theoretically. One case of such transmission has been documented in China. For now, our program will not include swine workers, but the vaccine is available for a minimal fee at the Campus Health Service.

Please contact Carol Dugger at dugger@health.arizona.edu, or 621-2568, if you would like to schedule an appointment for the immunization. Thank you.