



AVIAN INFLUENZA/H5N1/ or “bird flu”

KEY FACTS

- **Birds are a reservoir of many viruses**
- **Bird handlers are a high risk for H5N1. The current concern about Avian Influenza/H5N1 is based upon the potential genetic shift that would allow human to human transmission.**
- **120 cases of human infection with the H5N1 virus have occurred since 1997 (50% of the cases died)**
- **Infected birds shed flu virus in their saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. Susceptible birds become infected when they have contact with contaminated excretions or surfaces that are contaminated with excretions**
- **It is believed that most cases of H5N1 virus infection in humans have resulted from close contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces.**
- **Studies done in laboratories suggest that the prescription medicines approved for human flu viruses could work in preventing bird flu infection in humans. However, flu viruses can become resistant to these drugs, so these medications may not always work**

For additional information visit: www.hhs.gov/flu