



BIRD FLU

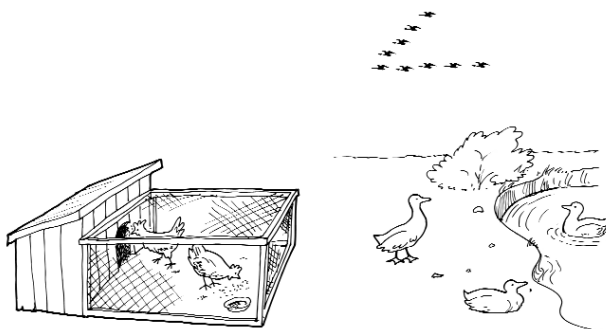
THE IDEA

In the last few years, a serious kind of bird flu, or Avian Influenza, has begun to spread from wild birds to domestic birds. It can kill all the birds on a farm or in a backyard very quickly. In a few rare cases humans have been infected. This Activity Sheet gives the facts about bird flu, including how it is spread and how it can be prevented. There are simple actions which families, including children, can do to help prevent the spread of bird flu. The most important issue is for people to know the facts about bird flu to prevent panic and confusion, and to implement simple steps to keep themselves and their birds safe.

Facts about bird flu

This section gives the basic facts about bird flu. These facts are suitable for **children** to learn and take action on.

Adults who keep and slaughter domestic birds, pluck them and cook their meat, will need more detailed information about preventing the spread of bird flu.



Keep poultry and their food and water separate from wild birds

What is bird flu?

Bird flu is an infectious disease that is found mostly in birds. Its scientific name is Avian Influenza. It is caused by a virus which is carried in birds. Some wild birds pass the disease on to domestic birds kept in farms or at home, such as chickens, ducks, turkeys and geese. In a few cases, the virus has spread from these domestic birds to humans. It is very rare for humans to catch this disease, but simple actions can be taken to protect both our domestic birds and our families.

How does the virus affect birds?

Bird flu spreads very quickly among flocks of domestic birds. Once they are infected, the birds become very sick and almost all die within two days. All the other birds in the flock have to be killed to prevent the disease spreading further. Wild birds are also affected although some may carry the virus without showing signs of sickness.

How does the virus spread among birds?

There are different kinds of bird flu virus.

Some wild birds have begun to carry a dangerous form. The virus is carried from one country to another by some migrating water birds, which travel long distances each year. The virus is passed on when these migrating birds mix with healthy local birds. This happens when they are looking for food, sharing a water source or leaving their droppings (faeces). The virus can also be spread easily from home to home or farm to farm when live birds are moved around. People may carry the virus on their shoes or clothing after working with birds. The virus may also be spread by moving infected vehicles, cages and other equipment.

How do people get infected from birds?

It is rare for the bird flu virus to pass from birds to humans. Tens of millions of birds were infected in the three years between 2003 and 2006, but only about 200 human cases were found in that time. The bird flu virus can pass from birds to people through contact, especially with the birds' droppings, feathers, intestines and blood. It is thought that people are most likely to get infected when they kill, pluck clean or prepare infected birds for cooking.

Can the virus pass between people?

It may be possible for the virus to pass between humans. The evidence in these very rare cases is not clear. However, the virus may in the future change so that it can pass easily between people. This is believed to have happened in 1918 and led to a worldwide epidemic.

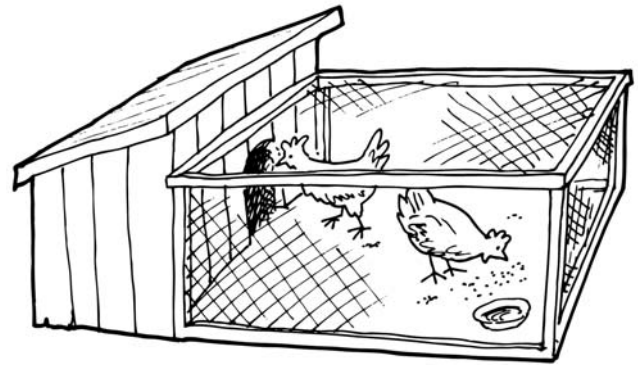
What happens to a person infected with the virus?

A person with bird flu may have a high fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, cough, sore throat, eye infections and muscle aches. After a few days the person may also have difficulty breathing. If a person develops a fever and other flu-like symptoms in a place where there is a bird flu outbreak, call a doctor or health worker immediately. Bird flu is very dangerous to humans.

Preventing the spread of the virus in birds

Here are some simple rules for families to help protect their birds:

- Keep chickens penned or caged separately from ducks and geese and from wild birds.
- Protect your birds' food and water source to keep wild birds away.
- Keep new birds separate from other birds for at least two weeks.



- Keep your birds away from water which may contain droppings of other birds, including wild birds.
- Regularly clean the area where the birds are kept.
- Report sick or dead birds immediately to the authorities.
- Ask the agriculture officer for advice on how to protect your birds and what to do if any fall sick.

Protecting humans from the virus

Here are some simple rules for children and their families to follow to keep safe from bird flu:

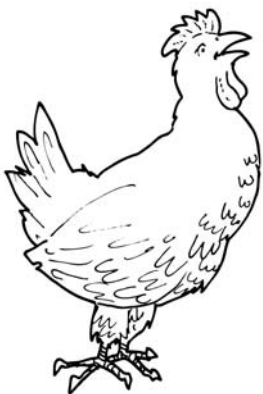
- Wash hands very well with soap or ash and water after working with, touching or taking care of poultry and after handling raw meat and eggs.
- Do not keep birds inside the house.
- Report sick or dead birds to adults, who should tell the authorities.
- Do not touch or play with sick or dead birds or their feathers.
- Do not swim in or drink from water sources used by birds.
- Do not eat sick poultry or poultry which has died from disease.
- Only eat fully cooked poultry meat and eggs (no pink meat or runny eggs).
- Wash surfaces and knives with hot soapy water after preparing raw meat.
- Get advice from the health worker on how to keep safe from bird flu.

Activities with children

Understanding

- Gather any materials produced in your country about bird flu. Use these materials and the relevant messages in this Sheet to help children understand the facts about bird flu.
- Describe this scene to the children – or if you or someone has artistic talent draw a large poster showing the risks of spreading the bird flu virus.

There are poultry wandering freely around a house. Some wild birds are down by the water pond next to the domestic ducks. A child is drawing water to drink from the same pond. Some wild birds are next to chickens scavenging for the same food. Other wild birds are flying overhead, with their droppings falling to the ground. A man is slaughtering a chicken. A child is picking up feathers. Another child is touching a dead bird on the ground. A woman is plucking a chicken. Another is cooking meat.



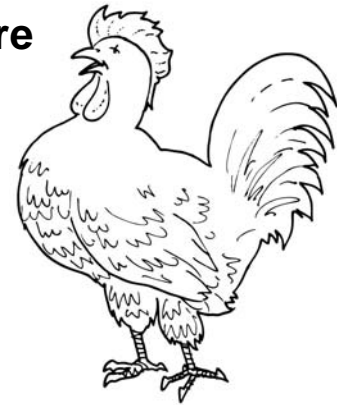
Ask the children to identify ten risks for passing on the bird flu virus. Discuss what can be done to prevent the spread of bird flu amongst birds and between birds and humans.

- If you have access to the internet, download the story called *Zandi's Song*. This is a story about a girl's efforts to protect her poultry. (Details are given in the **Other resources** section at the end of this sheet.)
- Children can make posters giving the key

messages about bird flu. Discuss the messages to ensure that the children understand.

Finding out more

- Invite the local agricultural worker to come and talk with the children about bird flu. The children can prepare their questions in advance.

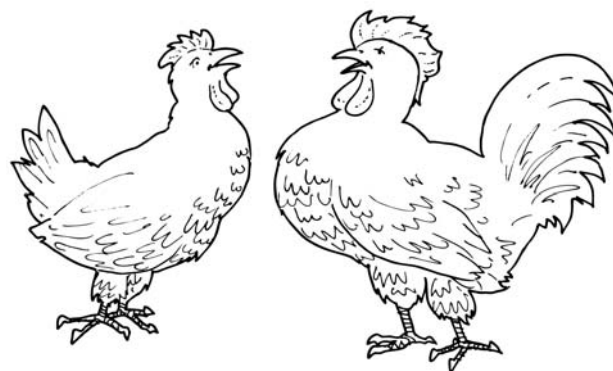


- Alternatively, visit a demonstration farm to find out how the poultry are being protected.
- Children can conduct a simple survey to find out how much other children and their families know about bird flu.
 - Children can do a simple observation survey in their community. They can find out: Where are poultry kept? Do domestic birds mix with wild birds when looking for food or water? What migratory birds fly over their area?
 - Children can find out from the media whether there are any outbreaks of bird flu in their country. Discuss the media stories and discuss what children can do to help promote awareness about bird flu. Keep a map on the wall to show where outbreaks have occurred.

Planning and taking action

- With help from the teacher or adult leaders, children can plan an open day for the community to share information about bird flu. The children can prepare some of the following activities to spread the messages: a drama, songs, posters, a wall magazine. The local agricultural or health worker can help to facilitate discussions with the community.
- Children can make pictures or stories with the main messages about bird flu. They can take these home to discuss with their families and decide what action they can take to keep themselves and their poultry safe.

- Children can 'twin' with a younger child in their family or neighbourhood. They can teach the younger child about keeping safe from bird flu. They can help the younger child to practise good hygiene, washing hands with soap or ash after coming into contact with their families' poultry and before eating.



Most important messages for children about bird flu

- 1 **Avoid sick or dead birds.**
- 2 **Report sick or dead birds to an adult and the authorities.**
- 3 **Wash hands well using soap or ash and water before eating and after touching or caring for birds.**

Discussing results

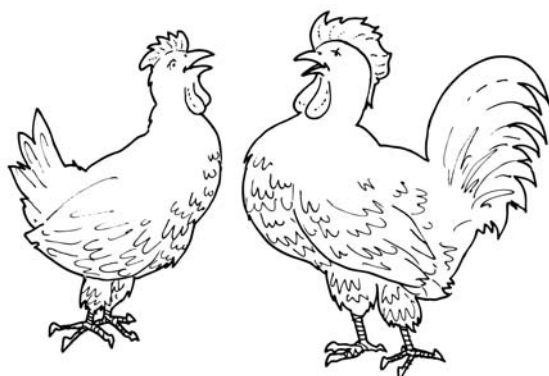
- Children can repeat their surveys to find out whether people have better knowledge about bird flu. Have people changed the way they care for poultry to keep the birds and themselves safe?

Doing it better

- Keep reviewing children's awareness of bird flu, especially if there is an outbreak in the country.
- The children can repeat these activities as needed. This Sheet concentrates on prevention. If there is an outbreak, there are other messages about how to stop the disease from spreading.

USING THE SHEET

Teachers and head teachers can use these ideas in schools to help children



understand about bird flu and to spread the ideas to their families.

Agricultural and veterinary officers can use these activities with groups of children and youths to spread messages and promote safe practices around bird flu. This will work best when they involve schools or youth groups.

The media can adapt these ideas to educate children about bird flu.

Other resources

This kind of bird flu or Avian Influenza has only emerged recently as a highly dangerous virus, crossing from birds to humans. Scientists are learning more about it. Find out from the Ministry of Health what the current situation is in your country. These websites also have up-to-date information:

- www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/avian_influenza
- www.aed.org/avianflu

The AED (Academy for Educational Development) website (above) has an interesting children's story, *Zandi's Song*, a fact sheet and teachers' guide on avian flu which can be downloaded.