



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Questions and Answers on the Embargo of Birds from Specified Southeast Asian Countries

What action has CDC taken?

On February 4, 2004, CDC issued an order for an immediate ban on the import of all birds (Class: Aves) from the following Southeast Asian countries: Cambodia; Indonesia; Japan; Laos; People's Republic of China, including Hong Kong, SAR; South Korea; Thailand; and Vietnam. CDC took this step because birds from these affected countries potentially can infect humans with Influenza A (H5N1). This order complements a similar action taken by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

What birds are subject to the order?

The order applies to all birds (including poultry) from the listed countries, whether dead or alive, as well as products derived from birds, such as hatching eggs. Owners of pet birds which originated in the United States (as defined in 9 CFR 93.100) may bring their pet birds into the United States provided that they meet USDA requirements, such as quarantine in a USDA facility for a minimum of 30 days.

Why does the order apply to birds, but not other animals?

H5N1 avian influenza is a subtype of the type A influenza virus. Wild birds are the natural hosts of the virus, which circulates among birds worldwide. It is very contagious among birds and can be deadly to birds, particularly domesticated birds like chickens. Infected birds shed virus in saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. Avian influenza viruses spread among susceptible birds when they have contact with contaminated excretions.

Why does the order apply only to bird imports from certain Southeast Asian countries?

Since mid-December, outbreaks of influenza A (H5N1), infection have been detected in the poultry populations of Cambodia, China, Hong Kong (in a single peregrine falcon), Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. The virus does not typically infect humans, but in recent months, Vietnam has reported hospitalized cases of serious respiratory illness, primarily among children, most of who have died. Thirteen of these patients were confirmed as having avian influenza A (H5N1), and nine of the confirmed cases have been fatal. The Ministry of Health of Thailand announced four confirmed cases of avian influenza A (H5N1) in humans; all four of the patients have died. It is believed that most cases of H5N1 infection in humans have resulted from contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces.

As the outbreak develops, CDC may amend this order as necessary, for example, to add or remove countries.

Does the order apply to birds already in the United States?

There is no current evidence to suggest that birds infected with influenza A (H5N1) have been imported and are causing disease in the United States. Therefore this order does not include restrictions upon the domestic movement of birds already in the United States.

Are there any exceptions to the order?

Yes, the order does not apply to any person who imports or attempts to import products derived from birds if such products have been properly processed to render them noninfectious, as determined by

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federal officials, so that they pose no risk of transmitting or carrying the influenza A (H5N1) virus and which comply with USDA requirements.

What is HHS' authority for taking this action?

These actions are based upon provisions in Title 42 United States Code Section 264 (Section 361 of the Public Health Service Act) which authorize HHS to make and enforce regulations needed to prevent the introduction, transmission, or spread of diseases from foreign countries into the United States, or from one State or possession into any other State or possession. CDC has implemented this statute through regulations, and those that specifically authorize the order can be found at 42 CFR 71.32(b).

Who will enforce the provisions of the order?

CDC will work with other federal agencies, such as the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Customs and Border Protection of the Department of Homeland Security, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of Interior, who have legal responsibility for enforcing the importation embargo.

What are the consequences of violating the order?

CDC is most concerned with making sure people comply with the order as a way of preventing the spread of Influenza A (H5N1) virus infection to humans and other animals. However, people who violate the order may be subject to criminal and/or civil penalties.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/flu, or call the National Immunization Hotline at (800) 232-2522 (English), (800) 232-0233 (español), or (800) 243-7889 (TTY).

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