Federal-Provincial Communications Committee

Representatives from:

- Canadian Food Inspection Agency
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Health Canada
- Communications Services Manitoba

Avian Communications Plan
Objective

- Provide consistent, useful, accurate and relevant information to Manitobans about avian influenza.
Outcomes/Results

• Manitobans clearly see provincial and federal organizations working cooperatively in the public interest.
• Joint communications where possible different government and/or agency have different roles.
• Stakeholder groups are informed and communications plans and messages are shared.
Public and media interest was high – has fallen but receives ongoing attention

Belief that avian = pandemic

Fears of human health, economic impacts and how disease may change
Approach

• Committee made up of federal and provincial communicators – CSM, Public Health Agency of Canada, CFIA

• All serve in some way on national committees - incorporated national messaging

• Rare accomplishment- multi-gov’t, multi-agency

• Consulting with producer groups
• Build on calm, measured response in fall of 2005

• Avian influenza affects birds and domestic poultry

• Need to acknowledge and address human health concerns
Approach

• Science drives decisions – need to explain science in accessible way

• Economic impacts and consumer perceptions

• Consistent and, where feasible, jointly delivered messages
Realities

• Plans are good – emergencies unpredictable so must be able to adapt quickly

• Rumours, queries and speculation may start well before any solid information or actions have been taken – means responding while fact-finding
Realities

- Different organizations, levels of government – different processes and approval procedures

- May result in individual communications – information will be shared
Logistics

- Once chair or others alerted – e-mails and calls to committee members
- Conference call/meeting to share info and next steps
Five Scenarios

In each one identify:

• Key messages
• Audiences
• Spokespeople
• Communication Components
• Logistics
• Potential issues
• Other
Educational messages initially:

• Wild birds carry avian influenza viruses without causing illness among wild birds, domestic poultry or people.

  • H5N1 avian influenza is largely a disease of birds. The virus does not easily cross from birds to humans.

• Importance of biosecurity controls.
Avian Influenza – low path in wild birds

• Manitoba and the federal government are working together to prepare for more virulent forms of avian influenza.

• The poultry industry, veterinarians and businesses are also developing plans and preparing.

• Avian influenza is NOT a pandemic.
Avian Influenza – low path in wild birds

• Hunters handling wild birds should follow routine hand-washing and safe food preparation practices.

• Disinfecting work surfaces, avoiding cross contamination, keeping raw meat away from other food utensils and thoroughly cooking all wild birds before eating.
Avian Influenza – low path in domestic poultry

All the previous messages, plus – we keep building on previous messages:

• Consistent with the guidelines of the World Organization for Animal Health, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is depopulating the infected premises in collaboration with the provincial government and industry.

• The risk to human health remains low.
Avian Influenza – low path in domestic poultry

• It is still safe to eat properly prepared poultry products.

• No signs of human illness, public health is closely monitoring.

• Personal protective measures are important for those who do have close contact with infected birds.
Avian Influenza – high path – wild birds

Messages become more intense and informative – likely to be more public attention and many seeking information:

• Disease that mainly affects birds - risk to human health remains extremely low.
• Few cases of human infection as a result of contact with wild birds.
• Hunters extreme care in handling and preparing carcasses.
• Poultry products are safe to eat. The influenza virus is killed if meat is well-cooked.
Avian Influenza – high path – wild birds

• Emphasize bio-security with producers and explain concept to public to educate on the high level of security and cleanliness of operations.

• CFIA is prepared to rapidly respond to any infection in commercial birds.
Parks, beaches, golf courses and other recreational areas are safe.

Avoid contact with wild animals, which can carry a number of diseases.

Avoid feeding geese, other wild animals or coming into direct contact with them or their feces.
Avian Influenza – high path – commercial birds

• The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is the lead agency:
  - depopulation of the infected flock(s)
  - quarantine of the premises
  - establishment of a control area

• The risk to people remains low - extra precautions will be taken to protect farm families, poultry workers and others who may have direct contact with sick or dead birds.
Avian Influenza – high path – commercial birds

• No human illness, public health closely monitoring people in close contact with the birds.

• On-farm workers will receive antivirals

• Bio-security importance.

• Poultry products, including eggs, chicken and turkey are safe to buy. All meat is inspected and must be safe for people to eat before it is sold to the public.

Avian Communications Plan
Lead shifts to Manitoba Health with Public Health Agency of Canada providing national coordination.

- Protection of human health is paramount.
- The health of those who live and work on farm(s) will be closely monitored.
- Avian influenza can occur in people, but is extremely rare and requires extremely close contact with infected birds.
- The risk to the general population remains low.
Avian Influenza – human case

• Extra precautions will be taken to protect farm families & poultry workers.

• Personal measures: Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly with soap and water. Sneeze into a tissue, cover your mouth when you cough.

• This is not a pandemic situation. It is a situation that will be carefully monitored to safeguard human health.
Communication Tools

• Media outreach
• Websites
• media bulletins
• Q&A
• fact sheets on AI
• fact sheet on backyard flocks
• fact sheet for hunters
• info provided to Health Links and Manitoba Government Inquiry (MGI) and 1-800-O-Canada (CFIA/Health)
• info on geese & other wild birds in parks and golf courses
Communication Tools

• web and call centres
• paid advertising
• public open houses
• public information on preventing disease in animals
• public information on preventing disease in people
• info for doctors and health practitioners
• fact sheet for producers and industry
• health fact sheet for producers & families
• info for consumers on food safety
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Questions?