

4 November 2022

Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis  
Outbreak Response Unit, Division of Public Health Surveillance and Response

National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD)  
24-hour hotline number: 0800 212 552

## Procedure for screening of individuals following possible exposure to avian influenza in birds including poultry

### Rationale

Avian influenza also known as bird flu is an infection, usually of wild birds but sometimes also of commercial or domestic poultry and other bird and animal species. It can cause large outbreaks in wild birds and domestic or commercial poultry. Different avian influenza strains are responsible for bird outbreaks, such as influenza A (H5N8), influenza A (H5N2) and influenza A (H5N1). Rarely, avian influenza viruses have been described to cause illness in humans. Avian influenza strains that have caused disease in humans include influenza A(H5N1), influenza A(H7N9), A(H7N7) and A(H9N2). The avian influenza viruses do not infect humans easily, and spread from person-to-person is unusual. The majority of people infected with avian influenza have been linked to direct contact with infected birds (live or dead) or avian influenza-contaminated surfaces (e.g. contaminated by secretions or droppings from infected birds).

It is important to conduct active surveillance of individuals potentially exposed to avian influenza viruses in birds or poultry to identify human infections.

### Case definition for person under investigation

1. Any of the following symptoms: *cough, fever, sore throat, runny nose, difficulty breathing or conjunctivitis*

#### **PLUS**

2. A *history* of having had *exposure* (direct contact or proximity of <15 meters) to potentially infected birds (alive or dead) OR having had worked in a poultry house with potentially infected birds, in the 14 days preceding the onset of symptoms.

### Procedure for screening potentially exposed persons

Ask potentially exposed person if they have experienced any of the following symptoms in the last 10 days: *cough, fever, sore throat, runny nose, difficulty breathing or conjunctivitis*.

- If they say YES: to any symptoms or you notice any signs of upper or lower respiratory tract illness or conjunctivitis proceed as follows:
  - Collect a nasal or a combined nasal and oropharyngeal swab in viral or universal transport media as per guidance on [collection of nasal/ oropharyngeal swabs](#)
  - Complete a [case Investigation form-Avian influenza](#)
  - All specimens to be accompanied by a [completed specimen submission form](#)
  - Make sure you have contact details (2 or more numbers if possible) for follow up in the event of a positive result
  - Advise the patient to avoid close contact with other people until the symptoms resolve
- If they say NO:
  - Reassure them



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR  
COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Division of the National Health Laboratory Service

## **SCREENING and CASE DEFINITION**

### **AVIAN INFLUENZA**

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- Inform them that should they experience any of symptoms listed: cough, fever, sore throat, runny nose, difficulty breathing or conjunctivitis, in the next 10 days they should contact a healthcare worker for further investigation.