

EPI Update for Friday September 29, 2006
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **This is *chilling!***
- **It's for the birds: avian influenza update**
- **Conference Announcement**

This is *chilling!*

This week is the final week of September Food Safety Education month. Our final tip this week is: **CHILL: Refrigerate foods promptly.** Cold temperatures slow the growth of harmful bacteria. Bacteria grow most rapidly in the range of temperatures between 40 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit, the "Danger Zone," some doubling in number in as little as 20 minutes. It is extremely important to refrigerate foods quickly.

- It is best to keep a constant refrigerator temperature of 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below (however 45 degrees Fahrenheit or below is acceptable if existing refrigeration equipment is not capable of maintaining 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below.) Do not over-stuff the refrigerator, as cold air must circulate to help keep food safe.
- Keep the freezer temperature at 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below.
- While grocery shopping, buy perishable foods such as dairy products and fresh meat at the end of your shopping trip.
- It is best not to leave perishable foods out for more than two hours. If in doubt, throw it out.
- Put away leftovers promptly and mark them with the date they were prepared. A chart for recommendations on when perishable food should be consumed by can be found at www.fightbac.org/content/view/186/.

It's for the birds: avian influenza update

Since the human influenza season will soon be upon us, here is an update on the H5N1 avian influenza that continues to affect poultry and humans throughout Asia.

First, the H5N1 avian influenza strain has **not** spread to the U.S. Through the summer and early fall, the enhanced surveillance program being conducted by USDA wildlife services in partnership with state wildlife agencies has identified a few cases of the "North American" low pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza virus in the U.S. The "North American" low pathogenic particular strain of avian influenza has been present in wild domestic birds throughout North America for many years, so it was not a surprise to

“find” it. Additionally, the North American low pathogenic H5N1 strain historically has not infected or caused illness in humans, and therefore is not a human health risk.

Second, the genetic make-up of the Asian high pathogenic H5N1 virus strain still **only** contains avian genes. The Asian H5N1 virus continues to primarily be “a disease of birds” and unfortunately continues to affect poultry and other species of wild birds, with incidental infections continuing to occur in humans throughout Asia. Indonesia continues to face many challenges with controlling the Asian H5N1 avian influenza in poultry (and subsequently in humans). Other countries, such as Vietnam, have demonstrated that human cases dramatically decrease or stop when efforts to control and/or eradicate outbreaks and infection in poultry are successful.

Third, the majority of infections in humans continue to occur due to close direct contact with poultry that are ill and/or dying from the virus. Although there have been a few isolated occurrences of human-to-human spread of the Asian H5N1 virus, this has only occurred in family members who are in very close direct contact with a person infected with the virus when the person is very ill and/or coughing extensively. With each of these events, investigation has revealed the initial person was infected due to close direct contact with infected poultry.

For the most recent World Health Organization (WHO) epidemiological analysis on the confirmed human cases of Asian H5N1 visit www.who.int/csr/don/2006_06_30/en/index.html.

For current WHO case definitions for humans infected with influenza A (H5N1) virus (published August 2006) visit www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/guidelines/case_definition2006_08_29/en/index.html.

For information as of Sept. 25, 2006 on confirmed human cases throughout Asia visit www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/cases_table_2006_09_25/en/index.html.

Conference announcement

Iowa Environmental Health Association 2006 Fall Conference scheduled for October 24-25, 2006, at the Marshalltown Best Western Regency Inn. Agenda and registration information can be found at www.ieha.net or call Carmily Stone at 515-281-0921.

Have a healthy and happy beautiful autumn week!
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