



**Information Update: Avian Influenza
EFSA to address possible implications
for animal and human health**

The recent confirmation of avian influenza (AI) outbreaks in poultry in several countries of Southeast Asia and the presence of avian influenza virus H5N1 in humans has renewed concern regarding the source of this infection and possible risk of human transmission.

Avian influenza is an infectious disease of birds. Avian influenza viruses are rarely transmitted from birds to humans, and when this occurs, direct contact with infected live birds is the main source of infection. In a statement issued today, WHO has confirmed that there is no epidemiological information to suggest that the disease can be transmitted to humans through contaminated food.

<http://www.who.int/foodsafety/micro/avian/en/>

While there is no direct evidence to support the food chain as a possible route for transmission of the avian influenza virus, EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) will continue to evaluate the possible implications of AI for both animal health and the food chain. The recent avian influenza outbreaks were discussed earlier this week at a meeting of EFSA's Scientific Panel on Biohazards and will be further addressed at the plenary meeting of the Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Animal Welfare on 29-30 January 2004. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) will continue to monitor this issue in close collaboration with the national agencies in Member States through its Advisory Forum, the European Commission and international organisations such as WHO and the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health)

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For more background information about the European Food Safety Authority, go to: <http://www.efsa.eu.int/>