

Avian Influenza – Bird Flu
ALTERNATIVE VETERINARY MEDICINE CENTRE
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AVIAN INFLUENZA

Avian influenza is a highly infectious [notifiable disease](#), which is capable of affecting many species of birds, including farm poultry, pet birds, raptors and wild birds. It is a virus disease and, as with human influenza, there are a great many different strains. The strain H5N1 has been associated with human disease and possible human-to-human transmission, in the Far East, and is highly feared as a result ([zoonosis](#)). At the time of writing, the virus had infected over 270 people and killed 165 worldwide, mainly in south-east Asia, since 2003. However, all those who have been infected worldwide thus far have come into close contact with infected birds.

Since November 2005, about twenty people have been infected in Turkey. On October 21st, 2005, British authorities confirmed that a parrot imported from Surinam had died in quarantine in Essex, after being infected with avian influenza, which was later confirmed as the H5N1 strain. In March 2006, a dead swan at Cellardyke was found to have been infected with H5N1. In May 2006, 50,000 chickens were culled in Norfolk, after the discovery of the H7 strain. In 2006/7, there was a great deal of media coverage of reported H5N1 findings across Europe. When the first press coverage appeared, the AVMC wrote to DEFRA (UK), the European Commission for Agriculture and to the World health Organisation (WHO), offering advice for possible homeopathic help in treatment and prevention. We also offered, **at our own expense**, field trials to prove the efficacy of such methods. The EC did reply, albeit negatively.

Wild infections have been identified in various species of wild fowl, in Europe. In the UK, the major 'scare' occurred on February 3rd, 2007, when the deadly strain H5N1 (capable of infecting humans) was identified in the Bernard Matthews turkey premises, in Holton, Suffolk.

It is no surprise to those who fear the consequences of [factory farming](#), [senseless transportation of food](#) and [commercial interests](#), to learn that it was on a highly commercial, highly intensive poultry unit, that the disease was identified. Approaching 160,000 birds were housed on this unit and were

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'culled'. The apparent source was semi-processed turkey meat, shipped in trucks from Hungary. The surprise news was that the Bernard Matthews operation regularly transports partly-processed meat from Hungary (where the H5N1 was found in January 2007) to the UK (and back again!). Common sense, decency and ethics fly out of the window, when great commercial rewards beckon.

Live birds were slaughtered and incinerated and restrictions were put on the operation, immediately the disease was identified. However, there were dangerous delays in identification, because the large numbers of dead birds that occurred were 'to be normally expected' in such a large unit. Deaths had been occurring in their hundreds, in a shed of 7,000 birds, since 30th January but, only after 800 deaths, were they reported as 'out of the ordinary'.

Happily for Bernard Matthews but neither happily for the birds involved, nor happily for common sense or decency, the operation was quickly allowed back to normal activity (12th March) , including the transport up and down Europe. This unprecedented haste was to be expected from such a commercially powerful organisation. The British tax payer is bound to be comforted in the knowledge that this poor man is to be compensated over £½ million, for his pains (current at the time of writing).

DEFRA received some criticism, from the local veterinary profession, for lack of communication at all stages of the Suffolk operation.

In January 2008, we are faced with an outbreak of H5N1 strain bird flu at the Abbotsbury swannery (Dorset). The **AVMC** has offered help with this, to DEFRA and to those organisations with an interest in the situation.

If you need to report a dead wild, pet or domestic bird, ring the DEFRA Helpline on **08459 33 55 77**.

[Homeopathy](#) is untested against Avian Influenza, in the field, but the usual principles of prevention by [nosode](#) and treatment by appropriate homeopathic remedies ought to be effective. Sadly, initiatives offered by the **AVMC**, in writing, to the authorities (DEFRA, EU & WHO), to evaluate the methodology, have been ignored or refused.

Post Script: In the Autumn of 2007, researchers have identified a mutation in the H5N1 which takes it a step closer to the capability of being spread from human to human.

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