

The Bird Flu Epidemic in Asia

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The bird flu has become a human epidemic in South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and China caused by the H5N1 strain of avian influenza viruses. These viruses range from a mild disease to a more fatal infectious disease. It is spread by waterfowl and sea birds. It can be transmitted by contaminated feed, water, equipment, and clothing.

Although bird flu is very infectious in birds, it does not spread easily to humans. Human deaths from this flu occur when the avian virus mixes with human influenza creating a new disease. The mixture of these viruses is very fatal to humans, who have no natural defense against the virus.

Bird flu has infected at least 141 people and killed 73 in the Asian countries. The victims with the virus have had direct contact with the infected poultry. Scientists believe that the virus could develop to spread from one person to another as easily as the common cold. The United States Department of Health and Human Services plans to develop vaccines, antiviral medications and strategies to block the spread of this virus so it will not become the next pandemic.

