

COMBATTING AVIAN FLU IN NORTH AMERICA:

The North American Plan for Avian and Pandemic Influenza

“Canada, Mexico and the United States face a growing threat posed by the spread of avian influenza and the potential emergence of a human influenza pandemic... While the virus has not yet reached North America, the three countries must be prepared for the day when it—or some other highly contagious virus—does.”

– North American Plan for Avian and Pandemic Influenza

The North American Plan for Avian and Pandemic Influenza was announced by the Presidents of the United States and Mexico and the Prime Minister of Canada on August 21, 2007 in Montebello, Canada, at the North American Leaders Summit. The Plan was developed as part of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP). The SPP is a trilateral effort launched in March 2005 to increase security and enhance prosperity in Canada, Mexico and the United States through greater cooperation and information sharing. The three nations are working together through the SPP to prepare for a threat that could disrupt our economies and cause widespread illness and death if it reaches our shores: highly pathogenic avian influenza—or bird flu—and the potential emergence of a human influenza pandemic.



coordinated, science-based approach to prepare for and manage avian and pandemic influenza. This common approach would be based on the four pillars of emergency management: prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Canada, Mexico and the United States also established a senior-level Coordinating Body on Avian and Pandemic Influenza to facilitate effective planning and preparedness within North America for a possible outbreak.

Background

The highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza virus, which re-emerged in Asia in late 2003, has infected birds in more than 55 countries in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and has resulted in the deaths, through illness and culling, of over 250 million birds across Asia. The virus is now endemic in parts of Southeast Asia, is present in long-range migratory birds, and is unlikely to be eradicated in the short term. Although it has not yet become easily transmissible among humans, the disease has sickened over 300 people and resulted in more than 190 deaths.

Although the timing cannot be predicted, history and science suggest the world will face at least one influenza pandemic this century. A worldwide outbreak of a new influenza virus could result in a high death toll, millions of hospitalizations, and hundreds of billions of dollars in direct and indirect costs to North American economies.

The North American Plan for Avian and Pandemic Influenza

The North American Plan for Avian and Pandemic Influenza outlines a collaborative North American approach that recognizes that mitigating the effects of a pandemic requires coordinated action by all three countries. It outlines how Canada, Mexico and the United States will work together to prepare for and manage outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza and pandemic influenza.

At the March 2006 SPP summit in Cancun, Mexico, the leaders of the three countries committed to developing a comprehensive,

Key Objectives of the North American Plan

The North American Plan provides a framework to accomplish the following:

- Detect, contain and control an avian influenza outbreak and prevent transmission to humans;
- Prevent or slow the entry of a new strain of human influenza into North America;
- Minimize illness and deaths; and
- Sustain infrastructure and mitigate the impact to the economy and the functioning of society.

The Plan establishes a framework for action on priority areas including: trilateral emergency coordination and communication; joint exercises and training; response to outbreaks in animals; surveillance among animals and in humans; laboratory practices; research; personnel exchange; screening for air, sea and land travel; and maintaining continuity for critical infrastructure and key services.

Central to the Plan is a North American approach that undertakes measures to maintain the flow of people, services, and cargo across the borders during a severe pandemic while striving to protect our citizens.

The Plan also complements existing national emergency management plans, and builds upon the core principles of the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, the standards and guidelines of the World Organization for Animal Health, the World Health Organization (including the revised International Health Regulations), and the rules and provisions of both the World Trade Organization and the North American Free Trade Agreement. It represents a significant contribution to the concerted efforts of national and multilateral partners worldwide to combat a growing challenge to animal and human health.

The North American Plan for Avian and Pandemic Influenza may be found at www.state.gov/g/avianflu

