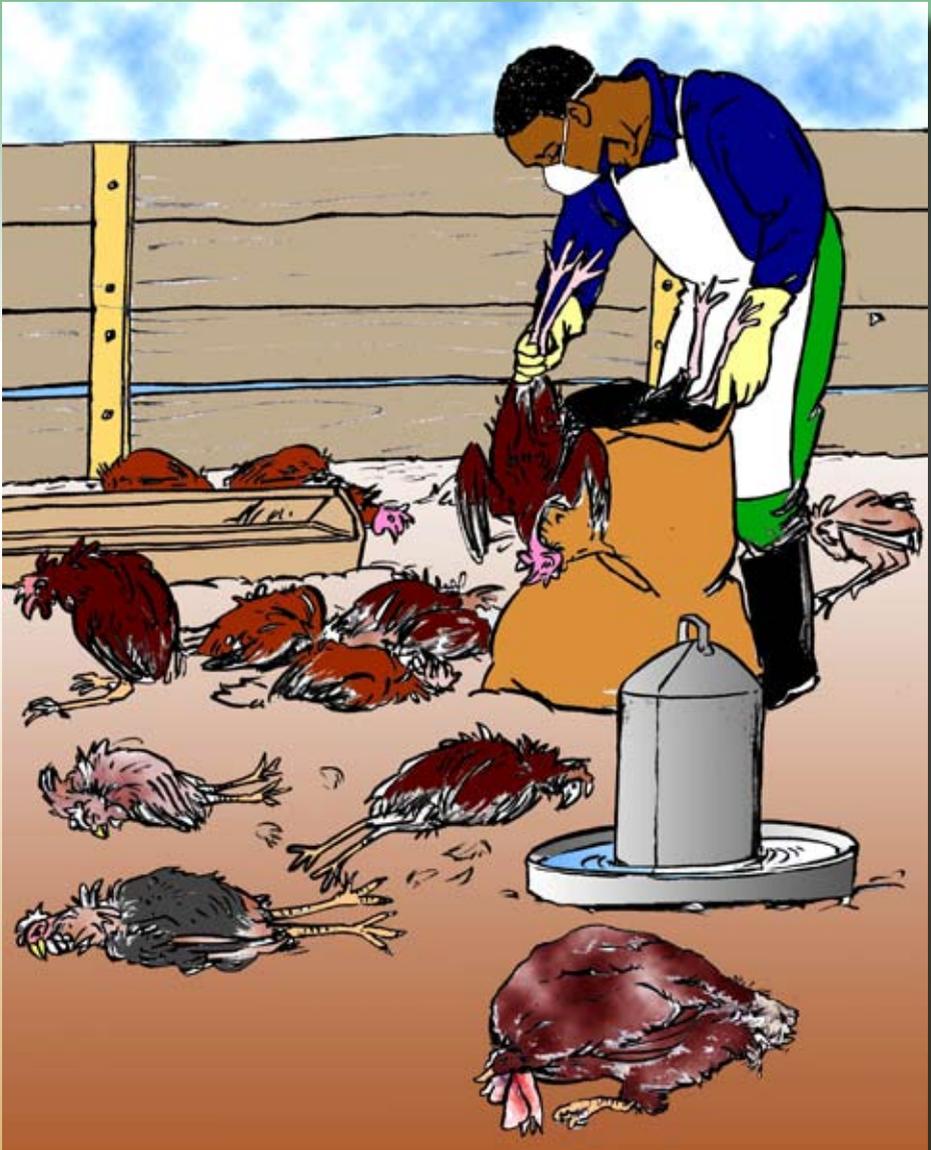


Facts about Bird flu



What is bird flu?

Bird flu is a disease of birds, but can affect people as well. It is also called avian influenza and is caused by the H5N1 influenza virus. Bird flu can spread very quickly and kill many domestic and wild birds in a short time.

Can bird flu affect human beings?

Yes, many people have already been infected with bird flu in many countries, including African countries.

How does bird flu pass from birds to people?

Most of the people who have got bird flu have contracted the disease through close contact with poultry and poultry products. This has included handling sick or dead birds, coming in contact with bird droppings (faeces), or coming in contact with the blood and fluids of sick birds. People get infected during the killing, plucking and preparing of sick poultry for cooking. They also get infected when they come in contact with cages, houses, shoes, clothing and vehicles contaminated with the blood, fluids and droppings of sick poultry.



Can people with bird flu infect others?

So far, there is no evidence to show that bird flu can be passed on from one human being to another. However, this can probably happen since the disease has the capacity to change its character.

How would bird flu affect our country if it occurred?

An outbreak of bird flu could lead to the death of many domestic birds and cause the collapse of the poultry industry. The many families that depend on poultry would get great losses. And many people would die if the disease got into human beings. This would force the government to:

- Ban the movement of poultry and poultry products to and from the areas of the outbreak.
- Close poultry markets.
- Ban the export and import of poultry and poultry products.
- Destroy all the imports brought in during the period of the ban.
- Find out where the disease started and the route it has taken and destroy (kill) all domestic birds along that route.
- Cull (kill) large numbers of poultry to prevent the spread of the disease.



What are the signs of bird flu in birds?

Birds with bird flu show the normal signs of a sick bird. These may include dullness, a drooping tail, a head held close to the body, diarrhoea, sneezing, a discharge from the nose and loss of appetite. But they also show the following signs that are more common in birds with bird flu:

- A swollen head, eyelids, comb and legs.
- Blood spots on the legs.
- Purple or blue colouring on the legs, comb and wattle.
- Dying suddenly in large numbers.

What should we do when we see birds with these signs?

- Report sick birds and birds which have died of unknown causes to a veterinary or government officer immediately
- Avoid touching sick and dead bird with bare hands. If you have to remove them, use gloves or a polythene paper.
- Avoid selling, buying, slaughtering or eating sick birds.
- Avoid moving poultry or poultry products to and from areas with bird flu.

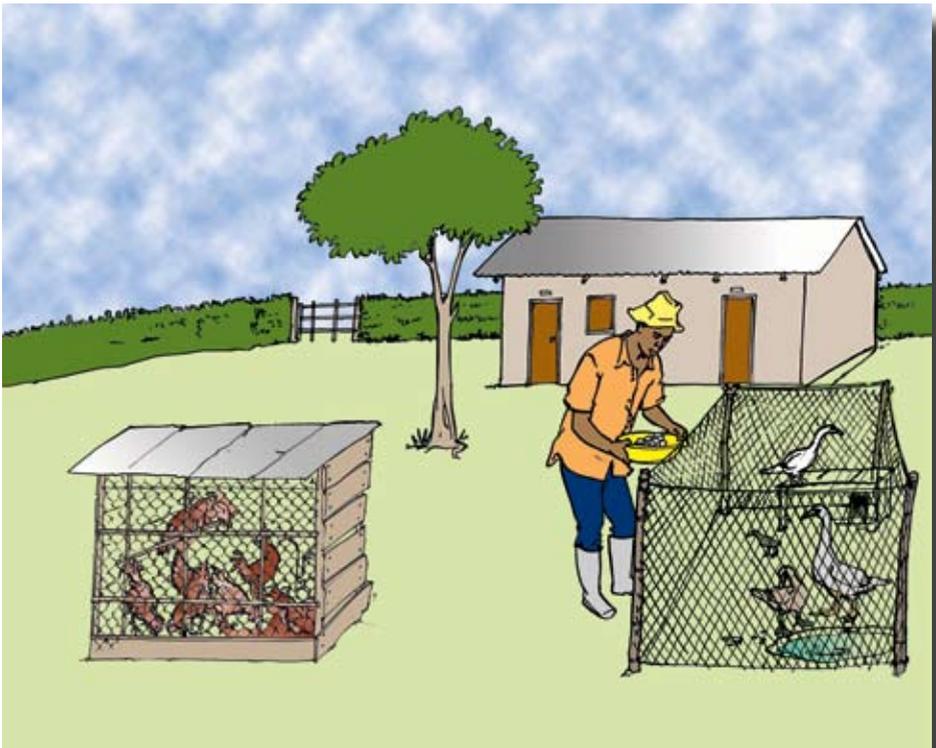


What are the signs and symptoms of bird flu in people?

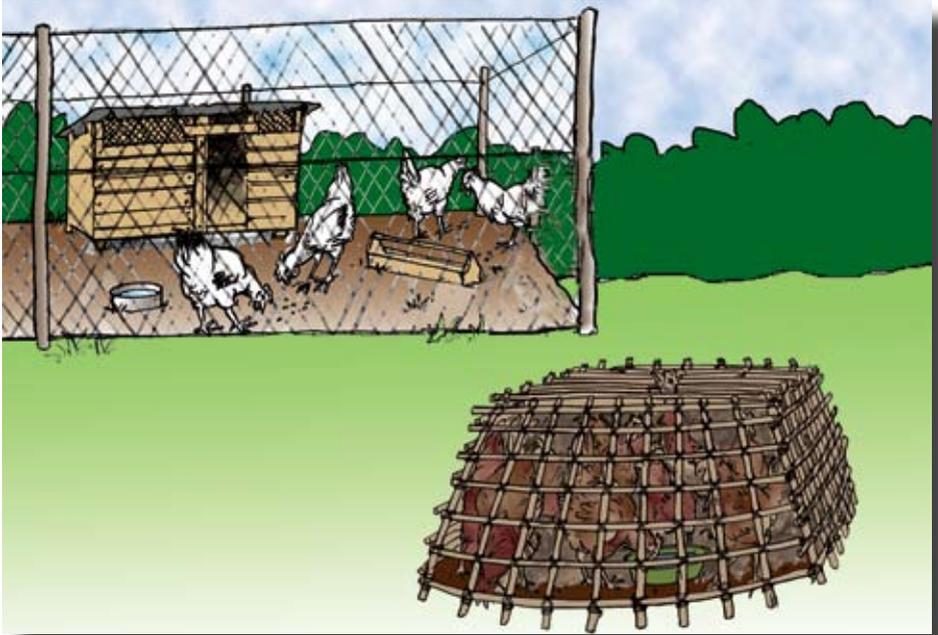
- Fever
- Sore throat
- General body pains
- Painful or difficult breathing
- Coughing out blood

What can we do to prevent and control bird flu?

1. Keep poultry in an enclosure to stop it mixing with wild birds.



2. Keep new birds separate from the rest for two weeks to observe whether the new birds are sick or not.



3. Put footbaths with disinfectants at the gate of the farm and at the entrance of poultry houses.

4. Wear protective clothing (gloves, aprons and gum boots) when working with poultry and keep the clothing clean.

5. Disinfect vehicles and equipment entering and leaving the farm.



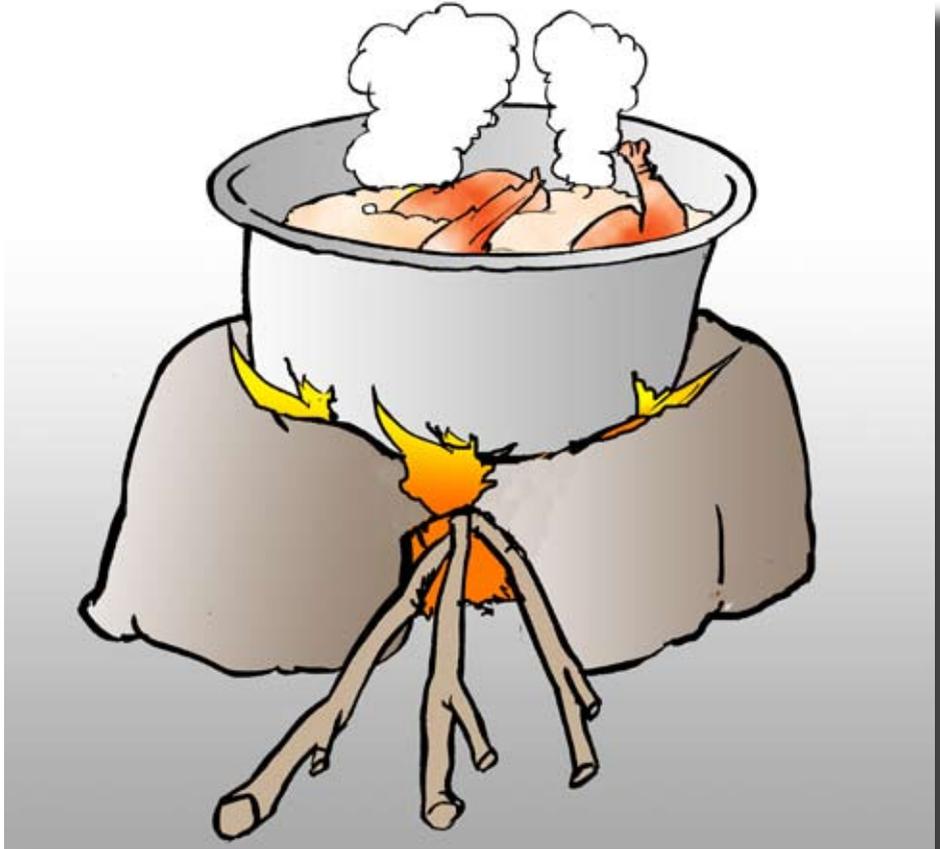
6. Report sick birds and birds which have died of unknown causes to a veterinary or government officer immediately.

7. Burn to ashes or bury birds which have died of unknown causes.

8. Wash hands with soap and water frequently, especially after contact with poultry, eggs and other poultry products, and after preparing poultry for cooking.

Is it safe to eat poultry and poultry products?

Yes, it is safe to eat poultry and poultry products. Prepare poultry, eggs and other poultry products in a clean way and cook them well before eating. Cook until the meat turns brown and has no traces of blood. Cook eggs until they are hard. Heat kills bird flu viruses. Separate raw poultry meat from cooked food, or foods that are eaten raw.



Can bird flu be treated?

Patients with bird flu who seek medical help early may be given medicines which can help the body to fight the disease and lead to recovery. Seek medical help early if you suspect that you have bird flu.



African Union

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