

OIE/FAO Network of Expertise on Animal Influenza

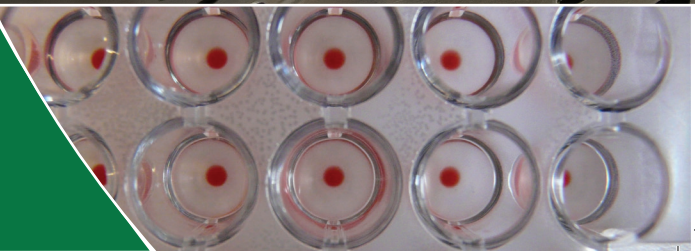
offlu



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



For more information contact
secretariat@offlu.net and please visit
the website www.offlu.net





Animal influenzas continue to threaten animal health and welfare, agricultural productivity, food security, and the livelihoods of farmers in all parts of the world. H5N1 high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI), pandemic H1N1 2009 animal influenza and H7N9 low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) have highlighted the potential for animal origin influenza viruses to evolve into global public health threats. To ensure that the impact and risks for animals and humans are kept at a minimum, it is vital that the animal health sector takes the lead in monitoring influenzas in animals and in sharing this information with the international community.

WHAT IS OFFLU?

OFFLU is a network of expertise on animal influenza established jointly in 2005 by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to support and coordinate global efforts to prevent, detect and control important influenzas in animals.



HOW DOES OFFLU OPERATE?

OFFLU works as a global open network of expertise encompassing the OIE/FAO Reference Centres and world leading experts from a range of disciplines including diagnostics, classic and molecular epidemiology, virology, animal production, veterinary medicine and vaccinology. Owing to its strong institutional links and participatory nature, it is a robust mechanism for the exchange of information between human and animal health sectors. WHO participates as observer in OFFLU activities.

WHAT DOES OFFLU DO?

- Develops technical guidance documents, recommendations, and tools for prevention, surveillance, and control of animal influenzas.
- Strengthens links between influenza experts in the animal and human health sectors by facilitating collaboration and coordinated exchanges of useful data and material (including influenza viruses that could be used for the early preparation of human vaccines).
- Advocates sharing of important virological and surveillance data with the wider scientific community, so that it can be used to inform surveillance programmes and control strategies.
- Enhances capacity through training and involvement of professionals from less developed countries with experts from the network.
- Identifies priorities for research and facilitates technical discussion.

OFFLU TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS



Small groups of experts collaborate in addressing specific questions or activities. The technical activities of offlu deliver outputs such as advice, development of standard reference reagents for laboratory diagnosis, proficiency testing of laboratories for molecular diagnostics, and guidance on validated diagnostic tests, reagents and procedures for emerging influenza viruses.

OFFLU collaborators characterize circulating H5N1 HPAI, H9N2 LPAI and other animal influenza virus strains to evaluate the efficacy of currently used animal vaccines, based on antigenic characteristics. This also provides information to assist the public health sector with pandemic preparedness. Also, capacity building and technology transfer are major deliverables for veterinary community.

