



PHE Risk Assessment – Avian influenza A (H7N9)

07 February 2014

The risk assessment was reviewed on 31 January 2014.

The risk of influenza A(H7N9) infection to UK residents in the UK is considered to be very low.

The risk to UK residents travelling to the affected areas (several provinces of mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) is very low and does not warrant a change to current travel advice. NaTHNaC advise travellers to take the following precautions:

- Avoid visiting live bird and animal markets (including ‘wet’ markets) and poultry farms
- Avoid contact with surfaces contaminated with animal faeces
- Avoid untreated bird feathers and other animal and bird waste
- Do not eat or handle undercooked or raw poultry, egg or duck dishes
- Do not pick up or touch dead or dying birds
- Do not attempt to bring any poultry products back to the UK
- Exercise good personal hygiene with regular hand washing with soap and use of alcohol-based hand rubs.

The level of risk in those who arrive in the UK from affected areas (several provinces of mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) and meet the case definition for a “case under investigation” is very low but warrants testing for A(H7N9).

The probability that a cluster of cases of severe respiratory illness in the UK is due to A(H7N9) is very low, but warrants testing.

Presuming compliance with guidance on infection control measures, the risk to healthcare workers caring for cases of A(H7N9) in the UK is very low. However, severe respiratory illness in healthcare workers caring for cases of A(H7N9) warrants testing, particularly if infection control measures such as isolation and PPE have not been implemented from the outset.

The risk to contacts of confirmed cases of A(H7N9) infection is low but warrants follow up in the 10 days following exposure and urgent investigation of any new febrile or respiratory illness.

The most recent A(H7N9) rapid risk assessment from ECDC was released on the 27 January 2014: (<http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Publications/influenza-AH7N9-China-rapid-risk-assessment-27-January-2014.pdf>). The risk assessment reiterates that the severe nature of the disease and the genetic features of the virus present a threat to humans because of the human pandemic potential, and this should be prepared for. However, the current most immediate threat to EU citizens is to those living in or visiting China. There is the possibility of imported, travel related cases occurring within the EU, which should also be prepared for however it is unlikely this occurrence would alter the ECDC risk assessment.



Public Health
England

Links to recent risk assessments:

ECDC rapid risk assessment (27 January 2014)

<http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Publications/influenza-AH7N9-China-rapid-risk-assessment-27-January-2014.pdf>

WHO risk assessment (21 January 2014):

http://www.who.int/influenza/human_animal_interface/RiskAssessment_H7N9_21Jan14.pdf?ua=1

Defra preliminary outbreak assessment (28 May 2013)

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animal-diseases/files/ai-h7n9-china-20130528.pdf>