



January 26, 2017

SUBJECT: Testing travelers returning from China for avian influenza A (H7N9) virus infection

Since 2013, China has had annual epidemics of human infections with avian influenza A (H7N9) virus. Currently, the 5th annual epidemic is underway. From September 1, 2016-January 15, 2017, 225 human H7N9 infections were reported in mainland China, including 51 deaths, and an additional 4 infections were reported in Hong Kong and 2 in Macao among travelers returning from mainland China. This brings the total number of cases since 2013 to 1,035 with 371 deaths. Most infected people have had exposure to poultry. At this time, no change in the epidemiologic characteristic of human H7N9 infections has been observed, including the proportion of reported cases occurring in people exposed to poultry, or the number and size of clusters of human cases identified when compared to previous annual epidemics. Prevention and control measures are being implemented in China, Hong Kong, and Macao to reduce the risk of virus transmission. CDC is working with China CDC to provide assistance as needed and monitoring the situation closely.

January 28, 2017 is the Chinese Lunar New Year; which is typically associated with increased travel to and from China. Public health officials should consider H7N9 virus infection as a possible etiology among travelers returning from China with severe respiratory illness, especially if they have exposure to poultry. For guidance regarding conducting investigations of human infections with avian influenza A (H7N9) viruses, please see Interim Guidance on Case Definitions for Investigations of Human Infection with Avian Influenza A (H7N9) Virus in the United States (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/h7n9/case-definitions.htm>). Please also see the following webpages for more information related to CDC's recommendations for specimen collection, testing, infection control, and treatment for H7N9:

- Interim Guidance for Specimen Collection, Processing, and Testing for Patients with Suspected Infection with Novel Influenza A Viruses Associated with Severe Disease in Humans (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/h7n9/specimen-collection.htm>)
- Interim Guidance for Infection Control Within Healthcare Settings When Caring for Confirmed Cases, Probable Cases, and Cases Under Investigation for Infection with Novel Influenza A Viruses Associated with Severe Disease (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/novel-flu-infection-control.htm>)
- Interim Guidance on the Use of Antiviral Medications for Treatment of Human Infections with Novel Influenza A Viruses Associated with Severe Human Disease (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/novel-av-treatment-guidance.htm>)