

OIE/FAO Network of Expertise on Animal Influenza

offlu



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Animal influenzae threaten animal health and welfare, agricultural productivity, food security, and the livelihoods of farmers in some of the world's poorest countries. Both H5N1 HPAI and pandemic H1N1 2009 have also 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 influenzae 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 influenzae in animals.



HOW DOES OFFLU OPERATE?

OFFLU works as a global open network of expertise encompassing the OIE/FAO reference laboratories and world leading experts from a range of disciplines including diagnostics, classic and molecular epidemiology, virology, animal production, 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 influenzae.
- 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. The technical activities of offlu deliver outputs such as advice, methodology, development of new tools, guidance, recommendations and information related to the prevention, detection and control of animal influenzae. Development of Standard reference reagents for laboratory diagnosis are also part of OFFLU's activities. OFFLU collaborators and national agencies developed two technical projects for Egypt and Indonesia. These projects – implemented by FAO – aim to characterize circulating H5N1 strains, to evaluate the efficacy of currently used animal vaccines and develop a methodology for this evaluation, based on antigenic cartography. Also, capacity building and technology transfer are major deliverables.

