



Avian Influenza in Azerbaijan

May 2007 - Issue 1

So far so good in 2007...but the need for vigilance remains strong

We have the luxury to breathe a sigh of relief for the first four months of 2007. No repeat of worrisome spring 2006 when H5N1 was confirmed in Azerbaijan. According to the State Veterinary Service the results of its April 27th AI monitoring of 25 wild birds on the Absheron Peninsula and in national nature preserves and parks in four rayons and along the country's shoreline and from 1,529 head of poultry on different farms - **all tested negative for the avian influenza virus.**

But how far have practices really changed throughout the country in the face of this threat? Do those at risk understand the dangers and do they routinely practice AI prevention? Now that the crisis moment is over, has the momentum been lost or is the government just carefully considering the necessary preparations and strategy? Read on to find out what's really happening with Avian Influenza in Azerbaijan.

AI Newsletter aims to improve coordination

This newsletter is a new UNICEF initiative to coordinate donor intervention on Avian Influenza in Azerbaijan. This monthly newsletter will provide a regular update on the situation in Azerbaijan, the ongoing efforts by both the government and the international donors.

Reading through this first edition highlights the impressive breadth of activities being undertaken, something we should all feel proud of.

Hopefully this will keep us all in the loop and limit duplication of activities. We invite you all to contribute information on your work to us. We are fortunate to be working with such a strong donor community on this significant public health threat.

Hanaa Singer, UNICEF Representative, Azerbaijan Country Office

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2 UNICEF and Government of Azerbaijan positions

UNICEF nominated to take the lead...



The UN Regional Coordinator nominated UNICEF, the lead agency in health, as the AI coordinator. Its role is to coordinate the different efforts of the UN, donors, and other partners involved to ensure that partners involved speak with one voice, to support the Government in its efforts to contain AI. The task force

includes WHO, USAID, ADB, World Bank, and the Japanese government, in addition to different NGOs as major actors. This group also includes several Government Ministries, including the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, and Education.

The next task force meeting is due to take place in June.

The Azerbaijani Government's Response to AI

"There is a great need for cooperation and coordination on AI as this is not a job for one person or one organisation. There needs to be a lot of coordination to keep us safe." (Emin Shahbazov, Dty Head Vet).

Ministry of Agriculture (MoA): In a meeting on May 8, 2007 with **State Veterinary Service** Deputy Head Veterinarian, Emin Shahbazov and Dr. Kliment Asadov, 'Chief of the Sector Epidemiological Supervision said,

- "serious work has been done as regards to border veterinary sanitary control by inspecting transportation coming across borders to prevent infected poultry from entering Azerbaijan. " -regional monitoring is ongoing, with participation from Ministry For Emergencies Situations, National Academy of Science Institutes, Ministry of Ecology to monitor wild birds and run tests, etc. And"the 3 kilometer farmer's compensation programme is in place following consultations with FAO".

The veterinary service was pleased their service was at last receiving some attention and upgrading and are grateful for the improved infrastructure, new vehicles, etc. Outstanding problems mentioned:

"low salaries, low status career in Vet service, and lack of infrastructure for village vets who don't have office buildings so they keep the medications and vaccinations at their homes and receive clients there. More public awareness raising, more caging of birds (although higher cost of feeding needs to be recognized)".

Ministry of Health Dr. Viktor Gasimov, Head of Epidemiology, on May 7th reported that in terms of epidemiology he felt that the MOH was now well prepared, "*More can be done, but we are generally well-prepared*". Dr Gasimov hopes that the AI Hotline will soon be up and running for the public. Also hopes for an AI library of materials to be produced. Whilst training has been undertaken in high risk areas of Azerbaijan, Dr Gasimov now states the need to extend this to all regions with the country.

State AI commission News: Mr. Yagub Eyyubov, first deputy Prime Minister, has been appointed as a head of the commission after resignation of Mr. Abbas Abbasov. The last meeting held on April 26 2007 agreed: to establish an Inter-Ministerial Task Force to strengthen inter-ministerial and donor coordination at the senior working level. (Information kindly provided by Rufiz Vakhid Chirag-Zade).



Upcoming AI Activities, breaking news

An **AI Communication Conference is to be held in Tbilisi on 28th-29th June 2007**, Hotel Marriott; UNICEF/Azerbaijan and the World Bank in Georgia will co-fund the conference. For information contact: Jamila Azizova: jamila.azizova@imc-az.org

Regional Animal Health/AI expert, Robert Tanaka, in Baku 11-16th June. Robert Tanaka has served as the Area Director/Animal Health Attaché at the American Embassy in Austria. He manages APHIS animal health issues for twenty-two countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The major responsibilities include negotiating trade requirements for animal products and monitoring animal disease outbreaks, including AI. Robert is available for meetings, presentations, etc. For more information contact: _TarakhovskyD@state.gov

New USAID AI specialist to be stationed in Baku June 2007. Ms. Tara Milani, due to arrive in June, will spend half her time on regional AI issues and half as the USAID health team leader.

A Thank You to our Embassies

The following Embassies and diplomats continue to support the efforts to prevent AI. We are most grateful for their concern and expertise:

Japan - Kohno Mitsuhiro
UK - Declan Byrne
US - Carolina Hidea
Germany - Klaus Keller
France- Bernard Du-Chaffaut
Switzerland - Alain Guidett

USAID has awarded a 3- year Contract (TASC2) Media/Communication Indefinite Quantity Contract (IQC) to the Academy for Educational Development (AED - a Washington-based nonprofit organisation) to design and implement a rapid-response behavior change and communication on the prevention and containment of AI in priority countries. Primary target audience small rural backyard poultry farmers, commercial and multinational poultry producers, vendors and markets. Secondary audiences, veterinarian and human public health workers. For more information: **Jale Sultanli:** jalesultan@yahoo.com

The **MOH/PHCSP AI National Hotline** is nearly ready; software has been developed, training for 8 AI hotline operators undertaken, equipment purchased and obtained the Free telephone number



AI Donor update

What each donor is doing for AI policy and Research

It has been a busy time for donors involved in AI. Activities have tripled and funding has swelled in response. Below is a brief update of donors who provided information regarding their AI activities in the areas of AI: Policy & Procedures, Research,



Donor Policy and procedure AI work

UNICEF: established a Communications Group, developed a draft communication strategy (17 May 2006). Key generic messages have been agreed and joint public information work has been undertaken.

WB: drafted AI communication strategy (May 2007) to be submitted to the State AI Commission.

PHCSP (Primary Health Care Strengthening Project) developed a protocol for HAI surveillance, and monitoring forms and instructions. This protocol was endorsed by MOH for piloting in 15 target districts.

DTRA (Defence Threat Reduction Agency)

Introduction of proposed regional EIDSS Reporting System (held regional meeting in Baku Feb 13-26 2007 with Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, CDC Atlanta and regional offices, MoH, MoA, MoES, WB, WHO, etc.) Threat Agent Detection and Response project (TADR). Joint efforts with CDC on development, training on pathogen-specific protocols and diagnostics, including advanced laboratory techniques for all TADR diseases.

WHO: Support to MOH epidemiologic surveillance and hospital infection control procedures. Support for transportation of suspected H5N1 samples to WHO collaborating laboratories (as WHO did in Feb 2006). Joint field inspections with MOH when necessary.

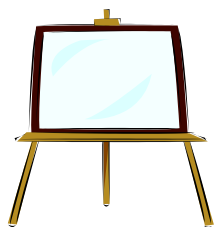


Donor AI Research

UNICEF: Knowledge, Attitude and Behavior (KAB) survey conducted May 2006, "Current Level of Awareness and Perceptions about the Avian Influenza in Azerbaijan" and "Preferred Channels of Communication Used in Azerbaijan" studies conducted by ERA May-April and August-July of 2006 respectively. New qualitative research to start May 2007 - 'Assess the impact of communication strategies in addressing Avian/Pandemic Influenza preparedness and response in Azerbaijan'. Formative Research on KAP Regarding Pandemic Influenza Prevention among School Children and Teachers is expected to be finalized by May.

WB: Undertaking a KAB study in May 2007. (i) to gain overview of the current AI awareness amongst population before launching national information campaign; (ii) to compare findings with those of the KAB survey conducted in May 2006 by UNICEF and identify changes over the one year period and reference baseline for information campaign. 15 high risk districts and Baku city.

PHC AI program Undertook a health KAB with questions on AI 2006, preliminary results available.



Donor recent Training & Workshops in Avian Influenza

UNICEF: ToT for primary and secondary teachers (Dec 2006). 157 core trainers reached 4,660 teachers. AI prevention lessons and materials distributed at every school in Azerbaijan, including a teacher's manual with lesson samples, 2 versions of a student's pamphlet (1 for primary school and 1 for secondary), and posters. Learning Symposium on 'Crisis Communication' and media relations conducted (Feb 2007) with the support of the Government of Japan for government officials to improve reporting to the media, e.g. on Pandemic Influenza.

WB: A ToT on communication techniques and risk communications planned for May 2007. Intended for government spokespeople and press officers.

FAO: Regional training on AI lab methods and other poultry diseases (ToT), training lab staff and establishing testing in national labs, field activities, training of field staff in disease recognition and field assessments and bird investigation methods for wild birds, including capturing and sampling. Regional training workshop on the epidemiology of infectious diseases, surveillance and investigation of outbreaks.

DTRA: Emergency Preparedness Training, notifiable disease reporting and surveillance systems.

PHCSP: Developed ToT curricula, helped 16 Master Trainers: 1) undertook introduction of HAI surveillance system, forms, reporting procedures, and response measures. 2) trained 300 district level epidemiologists and health care providers in 15 target districts and disseminating forms and instructions to detect, report, and respond to HAI. 3) conducted HAI orientation workshop for 151 members of district emergency commissions to discuss their roles in AI preparedness and response. 4) undertook 2 monitoring visits to all of the 15 target districts and collected data regarding surveillance

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The PHC AI Program Conducted focus group discussions to further inform recommendations regarding surveillance system strengthening.

The PHCS AI Program and **UNICEF** conducted two workshops for journalists (Sept & Oct 06) to help them report accurately on AI. Conducted AI conference 15 Dec 2006 to review the PHC Strengthening Project's AI program accomplishments. The conference participants also developed recommendations for Government.

BP: April 17-18, 2007 held a workshop for contractors on Pandemic including AI.

WHO: Training for MOH surveillance system and ToT Infection control for the sanitary Epidemiology Service (30 people).



And finally, what Donors have been doing for Infrastructure & Capacity building:

DTRA: Building a State-of-the-Art Reference Lab in Baku, refurbishment of local vet facilities. Upgraded security of regional laboratories. Purchase of 2 SUVs for MOH and Vets.

FAO: refurbishment of local vet facilities.

PHCSP: program provided donation of gloves, masks, laboratory supplies, hand disinfectant material, and sharps containers to the MOH for HAI preparedness.

BP: Bilingual leaflets for staff, posters on AI, training to all BP doctors and several presentations on AI to all interested parties (**Shahla Seidova, Occupational Health Advisor**).

ADB: \$50,000 was provided to MOA and Vet Service on Jan 27th 2006 for 'urgent efforts to address the threat of AI', including equipment, supplies for detection, testing, disinfection and protective clothing (disposable gloves, goggles, respirators, etc.).

Note from editor: This is an experimental newsletter. It is written with the intention of providing information and helping coordination on AI in Azerbaijan. We welcome any contribution you may have. If you have any ideas or suggestions, I would be delighted to hear from you.
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