3/15/06 Health Comm.
Attachment #2

Message from the Secretary *(continued)*

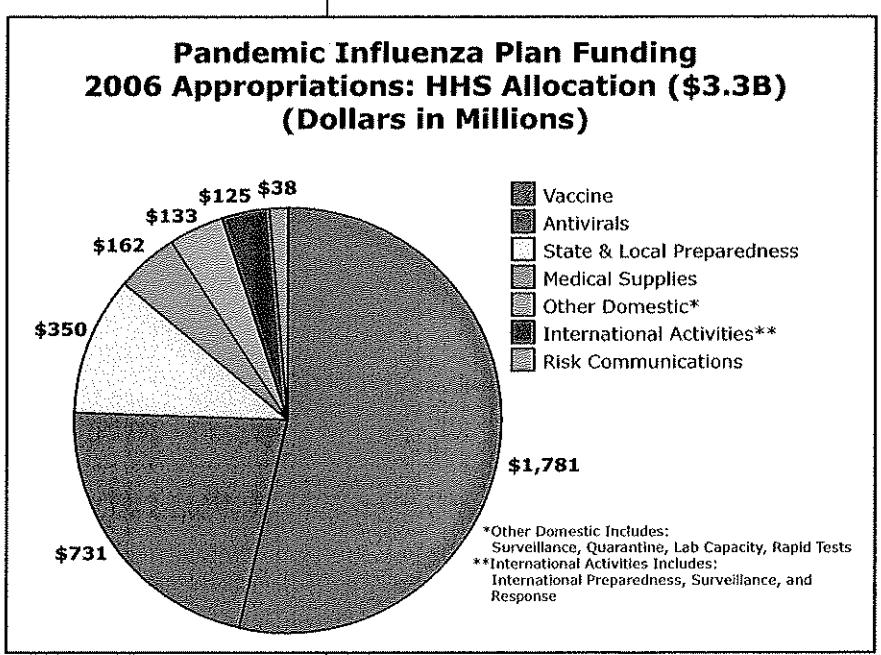
"We are better prepared today than we were yesterday. And we must be better prepared tomorrow than we are today."

Our Five Priorities

President Bush asked Congress for $7.1 billion to fund preparations, and in December 2005 Congress appropriated $3.8 billion to help the Nation prepare. Of that, $3.3 billion was allocated to HHS. This report outlines how that funding is being used to help achieve HHS's five primary objectives.

- Monitoring disease spread to support rapid response
- Developing vaccines and vaccine production capacity
- Stockpiling antivirals and other countermeasures
- Coordinating federal, state and local preparation
- Enhancing outreach and communications planning

We are in a race, a race against time and complacency. There is a role for everyone and we must count on everyone to fulfill their role.



By definition a pandemic is defined as a global event. In reality, a pandemic is a local crisis worldwide. It can happen in every state and every city and every town at almost the same time.

A pandemic is not like a hurricane or an earthquake, where resources and help can be shifted from one area to another. Should it occur, every community will need to rely on its own planning and its own resources as it fights the outbreak.

Preparation is a continuum. Each day we prepare brings us closer to being ready. We are better prepared today than we were yesterday. And we must be better prepared tomorrow than we are today.

Message from the Secretary

"Let me be clear. It is only a matter of time before we discover H5N1 in America. The migration patterns of the wild fowl that carry the virus make its appearance here almost inevitable."
–Secretary Michael Leavitt, HHS

We are in a race. We are in a race against a fast moving virulent virus with the potential to cause an influenza pandemic. In November when President Bush announced the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza, the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian flu virus was confirmed in birds in 16 countries. It was known to have infected 122 people and 62 – half of those infected – died.

Today, four months later, H5N1 has spread to 37 nations on three continents; 175 people have been infected and 96 of them have died. To date, most of those people were exposed to infected poultry. Fortunately, there has been no sustained human-to-human transmission of the disease, but the rapid spread of H5N1 is reason for concern.

PandemicFlu.gov AvianFlu.gov

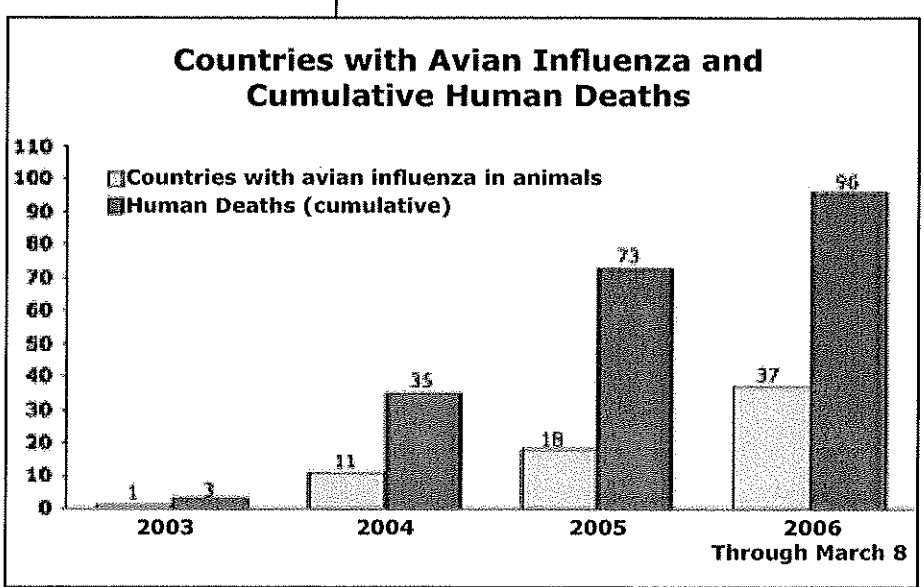
Flu Terms Defined

Seasonal (or Common) flu is a respiratory illness that can be transmitted person to person. Most people have some immunity, and a vaccine is available.

Avian (or bird) flu is caused by influenza viruses that occur naturally among wild birds. The H5N1 variant is deadly to domestic fowl and can be transmitted from birds to humans. There is no human immunity and no vaccine available.

Pandemic flu is virulent flu that causes a global outbreak, or pandemic, of serious illness. Because there is little immunity, the disease can be spread easily from person to person. Currently, there is no pandemic flu.

We are in a race, a race against a quick changing virus, for H5N1 has not only spread, it has evolved. There are now two main variants, or clades, of H5N1 and it is this second, newer clade that is spreading across western Asia into Europe, the Middle East and Africa. This second clade has killed over 60 percent of those it is known to have infected.



Let me be very clear. It is only a matter of time before we discover H5N1 in birds in America. The migration patterns of the wild fowl that carry the virus make its appearance here almost inevitable.

The arrival of the first H5N1 bird in America should not be cause for alarm or panic. It does not mean that a pandemic is at our doorstep. It should, however, motivate us to pick up the pace, to renew pandemic preparations on every front at every level.