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Johanns Requests \$91 Million to Fight Avian Influenza

Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns on Tuesday announced a request for \$91 million in additional resources to safeguard the United States against highly transmissible forms of avian influenza, a disease that commonly affects birds and has been transmitted to humans in Asia. The request is part of the \$7.1 billion National Strategy to Safeguard Against the Danger of Pandemic Influenza outlined by President Bush.

As part of the integrated U.S. government response plan announced by President Bush, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will supplement its international and domestic roles in controlling the spread of avian influenza (AI).

On the international level, \$18 million would be available for biosecurity, surveillance and diagnostic measures, including funding for an initiative led by the U.S. Agency for International Development that builds on the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to prevent, control and eradicate AI where it currently exists in Asia. USDA will work in partnership with the seven 'high-focus' countries (Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, Burma and China).

To accelerate domestic activities, \$73 million in funding would be available for stockpiling animal vaccine, surveillance and diagnostics, Smuggling Intervention and Trade Compliance/ Investigative and Enforcement Services, research and development, planning and preparedness and staffing and management. The objective of these efforts will be to prevent and control H5 and H7 AI in the U.S. commercial broiler and live-bird marketing system.

Worldwide, there are many strains of the AI virus, which can cause varying degrees of illness in poultry and can infect chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, geese and guinea fowl as well as a wide variety of other birds. Migratory waterfowl also are known to carry infectious strains of AI viruses. Each year there is a flu season for birds, just as there is for humans and, as with people, some forms of the flu are worse than others.

Additional information about USDA AI efforts can be found at <http://www.usda.gov/birdflu> and on the U.S. government's comprehensive Web source at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>.