

National Poultry Justice Alliance

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New Bilingual Bird Flu Pamphlet *NPJA Will Distribute Nationwide*

Austin --- As concern over Avian Influenza grows, a new educational pamphlet: *Bird Flu — What Does It Mean?* is being released by the National Poultry Justice Alliance (NPJA). The pamphlet, published in English and Spanish, will be distributed in communities nationwide.

NPJA, headquartered in Austin, Texas, is an alliance of member organizations representing people throughout the country including poultry workers, labor, contract poultry growers, environmental, public health, religious, and social justice organizations. "We saw the need in our communities to compile available information about Avian Flu and to translate the material into easy to read, understandable information", says Andrea Whiteis, coordinator for NPJA.

This pamphlet was written with the advice of scientists and medical experts at Johns Hopkins University. "The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future is honored to work in support of NPJA and its efforts to raise public awareness of the social, economic, human, and environmental and health issues associated with the production of confined poultry" says Robert S. Lawrence, MD, director of JHCLF. "With this educational pamphlet, NPJA provides clear and useful information that can help people understand many of the issues surrounding avian influenza. The fact that it has been produced in both English and Spanish language versions means that it will be a valuable means of communicating important information to a broad audience."**

"The greatest concern expressed in our communities is that the deadly H5N1 strain of Avian Influenza will mutate into a virus which can easily spread from human to human," says Aloma Dew, of the Sierra Club, a member of NPJA. "Many fear that H5N1 will become a world-wide pandemic like the 1918 influenza pandemic."

Public Health officials, including the World Health Organization, fear a major health crisis if mutation of the virus occurs, allowing it to spread from human to human.

The first H5N1 human infections of the virus were reported in Hong Kong in 1997. Reports of human infection and deaths have now spread throughout much of the world. There have been no reported cases in the U.S. at this time.

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NPJA represents many people who would be on the frontlines of exposure. “We want people to know the basic facts about Avian Flu, what to look for, how to respond, and to realize there is no need for panic,” says Carole Morison, Director of the Delmarva Community Alliance, a member of NPJA. “We also want people to know that it is safe to eat poultry if handled and cooked properly in the usual manner. There have been no cases reported of people catching bird flu from eating properly cooked poultry or poultry products,” says Morison. People should take the same precautions as recommended for other forms of flu, such as frequent hand washing, awareness of symptoms, as well as special precautions when around large flocks of poultry.

The NPJA informational pamphlet will be distributed in communities nationwide to help people understand the causes and effects of the H5N1 strain of influenza. It is also available by contacting NPJA, 510 S. Congress Avenue, Suite 206, Austin, TX 78704, by telephone (512)236-9503, or on the NPJA website at www.npja.org.

In conjunction with the release of the Bird Flu pamphlet, NPJA has prepared draft “Catastrophic Disease and Disaster Legislation,” which calls for grower protections such as direct compensation for lost farm income due to disasters such as avian flu; provisions for humane slaughter methods of poultry should such an order be necessary; provisions for environmental and health protections, such as proper disposal of dead birds and waste, immediate notification of neighbors if there is an avian flu outbreak, mandatory testing of all commercial poultry flocks, and absolutely no transporting of uncovered bird carcasses or waste. Also included are provisions for priority protection of poultry workers such as training, free access to respiratory, eye, and clothing protection, and high priority for vaccines when they become available.

** For more information from John Hopkins, contact: Office of Communications and Public Affairs (410) 955-6878 paffairs@jhsp.edu.