
March 26, 2006

Avian Flu Is Already a World Pandemic

To the Editor:

Re "Studies Suggest Pandemic Isn't Imminent" (news article, March 23):

Avian flu is already a pandemic: for avians. Human transmission is a global risk, but bird flu is already harming wildlife, poultry, food security and livelihoods.

Worldwide, more than 200 million birds have been killed or culled. In Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Egypt, primary protein sources and livelihoods have been lost.

In France, where the extreme Eastern European winter may have short-circuited east-west bird migration, its \$7 billion poultry industry is experiencing losses.

Control is a quandary: the animal vaccine may render birds better viral carriers and negate the role of antibody testing used to track the spread.

Migrating birds, backyard fowl and intensified livestock farming are all undoubtedly involved. Funds are needed to prepare for a human pandemic. But preventing its spread will require real money to support nations suffering economic and nutritional losses, and to clean up industrialized poultry practices.

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Boston, March 23, 2006

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