



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on June 26, 2024

Finland First Country to Roll Out “Prepandemic” Bird-flu Vaccinations for Humans; U.S. Ramping Up Vaccine Efforts

Finland is set to become the first country in the world to initiate a preemptive bird-flu vaccination program for workers with high exposure to animals, starting as early as next week, health authorities announced on Tuesday.

According to a [Reuters report](#), the country has procured vaccines for 10,000 people, each requiring two injections, as part of a joint European Union purchase of up to 40 million doses from CSL Seqirus, an Australian manufacturer.

“The vaccine will be offered to those aged 18 or over who are at increased risk of contracting avian influenza due to their work or other circumstances,” the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) told the outlet.

While there have been no human infections of bird flu, or H5N1 virus, detected in Finland so far, Chief Physician Hanna Nohynek highlighted the unique risks in Finland, particularly due to fur farms where animals might come into contact with wildlife. In response to the outbreaks of bird flu among mink and foxes at these mostly open-air farms, local authorities made the decision to cull approximately 485,000 animals last year, ostensibly to prevent the virus from spreading to other animals and potentially to humans, noted Reuters.

A newly announced vaccination campaign will target workers at fur and poultry farms, lab technicians handling bird flu samples, and veterinarians in regions with fur farms. Workers in wild bird sanctuaries, livestock farms, and those involved in cleaning premises such as animal by-products processing plants will also be offered the vaccine, per the report. Additionally, close contacts of any suspected or confirmed human cases of avian influenza will be able to receive the shot.

“Prepandemic” Preparations

Other European countries, as well as the United States, had been working to secure the vaccines against H5N1, as [reported by Reuters](#) in late May. Apparently, the European Union’s healthcare authorities and the U.K. are considering the vaccination of at-risk individuals a pandemic-preventative measure. Per the report,

In Europe, the European Commission’s Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority is working on a joint procurement of CSL Seqirus’s vaccine to “potentially prevent a pandemic” sparked by individuals exposed to infected birds and animals, spokesman



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Stefan De Keersmaecker told Reuters.

The report adds,

Discussions about prepandemic vaccine use are going on at government levels and among scientists in a number of places, including in the UK...

If deployed strategically to dairy farmers, healthcare workers and those in close contact with infected animals, “it would put a pin in the virus.”

As of late May, there were no reports of human infections in the entire bloc, despite the “outbreak” in wild and domestic birds reportedly taking place since December 2023.

U.S. Bird-flu Vaccine Efforts

In the United States, efforts to combat the bird-flu outbreak are also intensifying, and vaccines once again seem to take central stage.

While the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [maintains](#) that the risk to public health remains low, it [announced on Monday](#) that its objectives to “prepare for and mitigate the possibility of an [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza] A(H5N1) virus pandemic” in humans include vaccinations. One of the “focus areas” in this regard is not limited to vaccinating at-risk agriculture workers but the public in general, says the agency, aiming to “evaluating strategies to increase uptake of public health interventions such as vaccines.”

Another “focus area” of the preparedness and response to the potential bird-flu pandemic, besides “identifying potential vaccine candidates” and “estimating their impact,” is to closely collaborate with the World Health Organization (WHO) in doing so.

Vaccine manufacturer CSL Seqirus has already been tasked by the U.S. government with producing “approximately 4.8 million doses” of a new “pre-pandemic” vaccine, according to the [company’s press release](#) of May 30.

The press release says that the composition of the shots will be “well-matched to the H5 of the currently circulating H5N1 strain.” It is unclear how effective these vaccines would be against a virus that is defined by the CDC as “highly pathogenic,” or, in other words, the one that is rapidly mutating.

In addition to that, there are certain safety concerns related to the shots as [it appears](#) that the CSL Seqirus vaccine is currently only in phase 2 clinical trials, which typically involve several hundred participants to assess safety, optimal dosing, and initial efficacy of the shots. The assessment would normally have to be conducted using much larger cohorts before being submitted for evaluation by federal regulators and, eventually, going to the market.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has previously approved vaccines for potential H5N1 pandemics. While the timeline for the new vaccines’ approval is still uncertain, the agency has recently assured the public that it would waste no time in clearing the vaccine on short notice, if needed:

“If it is determined that the U.S. population needs to be vaccinated to prevent H5N1 influenza, then the FDA will use its regulatory pathways to take the appropriate steps to ensure vaccines are available in the timeliest manner possible,” an FDA spokesperson told CBS News [on June 3].



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Reported U.S. Cases

So far in 2024, there have been two cases of H5N1 infections reported in humans. In April, a dairy-farm worker in Texas was infected. This case was notable in that it was the first instance of cow-to-human spread. This was also the first instance when the virus was detected in a cow. [According](#) to the CDC, the individual showed mild symptoms, primarily eye redness, and recovered with antiviral treatment.

[The second reported case](#) from May was a dairy worker in Michigan. This patient presented with respiratory symptoms, including a cough without fever and eye discomfort with watery discharge. The patient was prescribed antiviral treatment and sent home to recover.

In a recent interview with *The New American*, Dr. Robert Malone explained that the vaccinations against H5N1 are not necessary for cattle or humans, and interpreted the governments' and media's reaction to the outbreak in birds as another psyop in the propaganda warfare against the people.



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