NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF

HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH

Commissioner

2016 DOHMH Health Alert #51: Avian Influenza A H7N2 Infections in Cats at the Manhattan Animal Care Center Shelter

- **Cats from the Animal Care Center shelter (ACC) in Manhattan have tested positive for avian influenza A H7N2.**
- **No human influenza A H7N2 infections have been detected in New York City.**
- **The risk for cat-to-human and human-to-human transmission of influenza A H7N2 is low.**
- **If evaluating a patient who has a respiratory illness and is an employee/volunteer of Manhattan ACC or adopted a cat from Manhattan ACC since November 12th, call the Health Department at 866-692-3641.**
  - **Human testing is only available at the Health Department's laboratory.**
  - **Do not send specimens to commercial laboratories**

December 16, 2016

Dear Medical Colleagues,

The New York City Health Department is investigating an outbreak of avian influenza A H7N2 among cats at the Animal Care Center (ACC) shelter in Manhattan at 326 110th Street, New York, NY 10029. It is not known how these cats became infected.

Feline infections with avian influenza viruses are uncommon, and influenza A H7N2 has never before been detected in cats. Human infection with avian influenza viruses, including H7N2, is also uncommon. Only two human infections with low pathogenic avian influenza A H7N2 viruses have ever been documented in the United States. One case occurred in 2002 in Virginia involving poultry exposure, and the second case occurred in 2003 in New York, and the source of infection could not be determined. Both persons with influenza A H7N2 virus infection recovered completely. Based on what we know at this time, it is believed that the risk of influenza A H7N2 transmission from cats to humans is low.

The Health Department is evaluating all employees and volunteers of the Manhattan ACC to assess whether influenza A H7N2 transmission to humans has occurred. The Department is also contacting all persons who adopted a cat from the shelter since November 12, 2016 to ask about respiratory illness in them and in their adopted cats.

Evaluating patients for avian influenza infection

Healthcare providers should immediately call the Health Department at 866-692-3641 if you identify a patient who meets the following criteria:

- Employee or volunteer at Manhattan ACC *or*
- Adopted a cat from Manhattan ACC since November 12, 2016

  AND

- Fever and cough *or*
- Fever and sore throat *or*
- Conjunctivitis

A Health Department physician will review the case with you to determine if influenza A H7N2 testing is indicated. If influenza A H7N2 is suspected, we will arrange testing at the Department's Public Health Laboratory. Specimens should not be sent to a commercial laboratory. Guidance will also be provided on antiviral treatment, as well as assisting with transferring the patient to a hospital for further evaluation and treatment, if indicated.

Infection Prevention and Control

Stringent adherence to infection control is the best way to prevent transmission of influenza viruses. If you suspect a patient of having a communicable disease of public health concern such as influenza A H7N2:

- **Rapidly isolate** the patient(s)
- **Adhere** to institutional infection control precautions, including N95 respirators and other personal protective equipment for direct patient care.
- **Follow** institutional protocols for notifying administration and staff

For more information, visit the Provider's page at www.nyc.gov/health. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jay K. Varma, MD

Deputy Commissioner, Division of Disease Control

Resources

CDC H7N9 FAQ: https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/h7n9-faq.htm

DOHMH HAN H7N3: https://a816-health30ssl.nyc.gov/sites/nychan/Lists/AlertUpdateAdvisoryDocuments/HAN_H7N3_2013-04_15APR.pdf

CDC Avian Influenza A (H7N9) Virus: https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/h7n9-virus.htm

CDC Influenza Antiviral Use: http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/

World Health Organization Avian Influenza A(H7N9) Virus:

http://www.who.int/influenza/human_animal_interface/influenza_h7n9/en/index.html