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H5N1 influenza outbreak during March 2006 in Jordan

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Abstract: The highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 pandemic motivated countries around the World to be prepared for outbreaks within their borders. Well ahead of the outbreak, in Jordan contingency plans were prepared involving all relevant bodies in both the private and public sectors and a practice was simulated to test the effectiveness of the task force and the applicability of the plan. The highly pathogenic H5N1 influenza virus was detected and confirmed in one turkey in a backyard flock comprising 12 turkeys and 25 chickens in Kufranjah, 6 km from Ajloun city, on 23 March 2006. The samples were confirmed by the following day. Control measures were implemented immediately according to the national contingency plan and complete clean up achieved by 27 March 2006. A 3 km area around the index case was designated as a control zone, with a 10 km area around the holding further designated as a surveillance zone. The objective was to stamp out the infection and approximately 20,000 birds were destroyed including all commercial and backyard flocks in the control zone. All the human contacts were examined, treated and discharged from the hospital. The immediate response from all Jordanian sectors involved in the control strategy was positive as a result of increasing awareness and training programs that were implemented six months before the occurrence of the outbreak. A total estimated economic loss posed by this outbreak including compensation was almost \$US169 million. Following the outbreak, passive surveillance for the virus was undertaken and training and capacity building continued. Efforts made in the preparation for an outbreak paid dividends and the need for a department responsible for monitoring migratory and wild birds in Jordan was recognized. Legislation regarding biosecurity of poultry farms and poultry transport vehicles should be revised.