

Dear Colleague

ROUTINE SEASONAL INFLUENZA IMMUNISATION FOR POULTRY WORKERS IN 2009-10

1. I am writing to inform you of the arrangements for vaccinating poultry workers against seasonal influenza in 2009-10.

Background

2. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommended in 2005 that poultry workers should be given seasonal flu vaccination to minimise the theoretical public health risk of avian influenza mixing with seasonal flu and possibly mutating into a pandemic flu strain. Our earlier CMO letter dated 16 March 2009 confirmed that the national policy for flu immunisation in 2009-10 would once again include poultry workers and workers involved in surveillance of wild birds for avian influenza in the target groups for the free influenza vaccination.

3. As you will know, **influenza A (H1N1)** has emerged in recent months, and it is more important than ever that poultry workers are vaccinated against seasonal flu. We are also planning for delivery of a vaccination programme against Influenza A (H1N1) and more advice will follow on this when available. In the meantime we are asking Boards to plan on the basis that both seasonal influenza and influenza A (H1N1) vaccination programmes need to be delivered this year.

Action

4. NHS Boards are required to arrange for all identifiable poultry workers in their area to be offered the current seasonal flu vaccination. **Funding arrangements are set out in Annex A.**

5. Guidance to assist in the definition of poultry worker is attached at **Annex B**. The approximate number of holdings with poultry in each NHS Board area, and details of how to access information on poultry workers in your area are attached at **Annex C**.

CMO 9 (2009)

25 August 2009

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards
General Practitioners
Practice Nurses
Health Visitors
Directors of Pharmacy
Immunisation Co-ordinators
CPHMs
Directors of Public Health
Medical Directors, NHS Boards (for distribution to GP practices)
Scottish Prison Service
Scottish Ambulance Service
Community Pharmacy Contractors
Nurse Directors

For information

NHS Boards
Specialists in Pharmaceutical Public Health
Infectious Disease Consultants
Consultant Paediatricians
Consultant Physicians
Health Protection Scotland
Chief Executive, NHS Health Scotland
NHS 24

Enquiries to:

Further Enquiries

Vaccine supplies

Mr Edward Mallinson

Edward.mallinson@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk

Policy Issues

Rona Watters

3ES, St Andrew's House

Rona.watters@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Medical Issues

Dr Andrew Riley

2N.07, St Andrew's House

Andrew.riley@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk>



6. A suggested draft letter setting out the reasons for promoting the flu vaccination (if appropriate to local arrangements), is enclosed at **Annex D**. NHS Boards can use this letter to inform registered poultry holdings of this vaccination programme and the importance of poultry workers being immunised.

7. As in previous years, an information leaflet for poultry workers is available for Boards to support their vaccination activities and hard copies can be ordered from RR Donnelly by emailing david.sellar@rrd.com.

NHS Helpline

8. The NHS Helpline will support the seasonal flu vaccination programme by handling calls and providing information to the public. In order to ensure callers are directed to the appropriate local services, NHS Boards should ensure they provide details of their local arrangements to the NHS Helpline. Details should be forwarded prior to the issue of letters of notification to registered poultry holdings, to gail.lumsden@nhs24.scot.nhs.uk who can also be contacted on telephone number 0800 22 44 88.

Further details are enclosed in this letter. Finally, thank you for your participation in this campaign.

Yours sincerely

DR HARRY BURNS
Chief Medical Officer

Dr MARGARET MCGUIRE
Acting Chief Nursing Officer

PROFESSOR BILL SCOTT
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

1. As in previous years, the Scottish Government will reimburse the costs of implementing the vaccination of poultry workers. Local NHS Boards have flexibility to determine the most appropriate way to achieve this aim in their area.

Payments for GPs

2. Contractors will be paid through a Direct Enhanced Services (DES) for immunisation against influenza that covers all categories detailed in the current CMO letter dated 16 March 2009, which included poultry workers. Details of the payment arrangements to GP Practices for immunisation against influenza and reporting to Practitioners Services Division (PSD) and Health Protection Scotland (HPS) will be sent separately in a circular from the Primary Care Division.

Payment for NHS Boards

3. NHS Boards who make alternative arrangements to that outlined in paragraph two above can claim the costs from the Scottish Government Public Health Directorate. Before any payment can be made, NHS Boards will be required to provide the actual number of flu immunisations made in respect of poultry workers to Rona Watters, Health Protection Team, 3 East South, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG. Claims for the 2009-10 vaccination programme should be submitted by the end of February 2010.

DEFINITION OF TARGET POPULATION

The key groups to be immunised in the 2009-10 programme are:

1. those who work in poultry units (including those with game birds);
2. those carrying out ancillary processes in such units which involve coming into contact with live or dead birds e.g. catchers, poultry processors and those involved in the slaughter of birds;
3. veterinarians or researchers who routinely visit such poultry units e.g. Animal Health Agency, Meat Hygiene Service, Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate;
4. those engaged in supporting surveillance for avian influenza in wild birds, e.g. employed by Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish SPCA.

Those involved in units with less than 50 birds or domestic owners of poultry, those who have direct contact with birds in pet shops, aviaries or zoos, and members of poultry workers' families are assessed as being at lower risk. If they seek immunisation, they should not be turned down, but neither should they be proactively approached.

IDENTIFYING DEFINED POULTRY WORKERS

The table below gives the approximate number of poultry holdings in each area.

Number of Poultry Holdings with more than 50 Birds, by Health Board Area

Health Board Area	Number of Holdings
Ayrshire & Arran	106
Borders	250
Dumfries & Galloway	252
Fife	114
Forth Valley	61
Grampian	327
Great Glasgow and Clyde	40
Highland	235
Lanarkshire	62
Lothian	133
Orkney	37
Shetland	7
Tayside	282
Western Isles	9
Scotland Total	1,915

Source: GB Poultry Register as at 8 July 2009

To assist NHS Boards in contacting poultry workers in their area, the Animal Health and Welfare Division (AH & W) in the Scottish Government will be providing information from the GB Poultry Register, a database of people keeping over 50 birds. AH & W will contact the Immunisation Co-ordinators regarding provision of this data.

A suggested draft letter from Boards to registered poultry holdings is attached at Annex D.

The Scottish Government will also be communicating with farming organisations and large poultry companies to inform the industry of the vaccination campaign, and to let them know that information on local arrangements will follow from the NHS Board.

DRAFT TEXT OF POSSIBLE LETTER TO BE SENT TO REGISTERED POULTRY HOLDINGS BY NHS BOARDS

Dear [Name]

I am writing to you, as a registered poultry/game keeper of more than 50 birds, to advise you that you and your workers at your poultry/game holding are entitled to a free seasonal flu jab as part of the Scottish Government's annual flu immunisation campaign.

The free flu vaccination is available to all poultry workers working in registered premises. It will give you and your fellow workers some personal protection against normal seasonal influenza, which typically occurs over the winter months. It may also contribute as a public health measure to prevent a new pandemic strain of influenza from developing. It is thought that a new strain of influenza which can be transmitted readily from human to human could occur if the usual human seasonal flu and bird flu viruses are present together allowing the viruses to mix.

Please note that this flu vaccine only offers some protection against normal seasonal human flu, and offers no protection against bird flu.

Seasonal flu is an illness caused by a virus. Because flu viruses are always changing, people need the new vaccine each year. You are recommended to have your free flu jab as early in the season as possible to give you the best possible protection. After April we will be moving into the next flu season and the strain will be slightly different to the strain you will be vaccinated against just now.

You should note that a separate vaccination programme against influenza A (H1N1) (also known as 'swine flu') will also run this autumn, and separate advice will be provided about that when arrangements for vaccination are known. The seasonal influenza vaccination will not offer any protection against influenza A (H1N1) and so anyone who is vaccinated against seasonal flu will also still require vaccination against influenza A (H1N1)

If you or your fellow workers wish to proceed with flu vaccination please contact [insert local arrangements]. I enclose for your information a leaflet entitled "Protect Yourself and Millions of Others", which you may find useful. For any other information on the free flu jab, please call the NHS Helpline free on 0800 22 44 88 between 8am and 10pm, 7 days a week.

Yours faithfully