Careful, This Can Lead to an Untreatable Infection in Your Pet

Give this due consideration, because it's linked to a gene mutation and even a potential pandemic. Even as bad as all that, 'experts' are looking for answers in all the wrong places. You won't believe what they've come up with now.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- The largest outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N2 avian flu (bird flu) in U.S. history took place in 2015 among poultry raised in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOS)
- Hundreds of millions of dollars from taxpayers have been used to prevent CAFOs from closing down
- Disease runs rampant among animals raised in filthy conditions and tight quarters on CAFOs
- Scientists have created a genetically engineered chicken that's resistant to avian flu infection
- The most common sense way to stop the spread of disease among animals is to allow them to live healthy natural lives

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In the past year, the industrial agriculture system in the U.S. had something unprecedented happen: the largest outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N2 avian flu (bird flu) in U.S. history.

Perhaps it's not surprising. Concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOS) that house chickens and turkeys are sometimes known as "poultry prisons." One chicken "house" may hold 30,000 birds, each with less than a square foot of room to live in.

The birds grow "at a freakishly fast pace," according to "CAFO: The Book," and most will spend their short seven-week lives living on top of their own waste.[1]

In conditions like these, disease spreads like wildfire, which is why the rapid spread of avian flu among CAFO birds was to be expected. Still, the sheer numbers it affected were certainly shocking. Since December 2014, 48 million chickens and turkeys were killed in the U.S. to stop the spread of bird flu.

The U.S. government even approved $330 million in "emergency funds" to help fight the disease's spread.[2] And the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved $130 million (of taxpayer money) to help CAFOs "get back on their feet," even though the problem was clearly of their own making.[3]

Glowing GMO Chickens Created to Stop Bird Flu

The best way to stop the spread of disease among animals is to allow them to live healthy lives. For chickens, this means roaming outdoors in the fresh air and sunlight, foraging for insects and worms. This is in direct contrast to the lives of a CAFO chicken, including those used to lay eggs.

In Iowa, the top egg-producing state in the U.S., CAFOs may house an average of 60 million egg-laying hens.[4] The state was among the hardest hit by the avian flu outbreak, with about 40% of the egg-laying CAFO wiped out.[5]

Unfortunately, instead of admitting the obvious that housing millions of birds in one confined space is a recipe for rampant disease, researchers are turning to genetic engineering to create a bird that's resistant to avian flu infection.

The genetically engineered (GE) chickens were created after egg yolks were injected with a "decoy gene." The resulting chicken will then contain the decoy gene and be able to pass it along to offspring.

If the GE chickens are exposed to flu, the idea is that the virus will copy the decoy gene and its ability to reproduce will be inhibited.

The GE chickens are designed to not only block initial infection but also prevent transmission if they do become infected.[6] The GE chickens have also been injected with a fluorescent protein that makes them glow when exposed to ultraviolet light.

Since the chickens are not allowed in the food chain (yet), they're made to glow so they can be easily identified. The GE chickens aren't slated for commercial food production anytime soon due to safety and environmental concerns.

But the research was backed by the U.K. government (and some top chicken producers), and in the U.S. the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved GE salmon. So, sadly, it might not be much of a stretch for the government to next allow GE chickens on the market.

Be Wary of CAFO Chicken and Eggs

When shopping for food for your pet (or yourself for that matter), avoid chicken and eggs that come from CAFOs. The avian flu outbreak is just one reason why.

Although avian flu doesn't spread easily among humans, its capability to mutate has caused scientists to be concerned about a possible human pandemic. In addition, U.S. agriculture accounts for 80% of the antibiotics used in the U.S.

That's close to **25 million pounds of antibiotics** administered to livestock in the U.S. every year, and not to treat diseases. The drugs are administered at low doses to help the animals grow bigger faster.

This practice is promoting the spread of antibiotic-resistant disease, and when you or your pet eats this meat, it's possible to become colonized with the resistant organisms.

Drug-resistant bacteria also accumulate in manure that is spread on fields and enters waterways, allowing the drug-resistant bacteria to spread far and wide and ultimately travel back up the food chain to you and your pets.

Beyond this, chickens that are happier are healthier. Chickens that spend their lives outdoors, doing what they were meant to do, don't require the drugs that stressed, unhappy, and unhealthy CAFO'd chickens do.

They have lower levels of stress hormones in their bodies and higher levels of vitamins, minerals, and EFAs.

Look for Organic, Antibiotic-Free Foods for Your Pet

Unfortunately, most pet foods on the market are made from meat and animal byproducts sourced from CAFOs.

Along with feeding antibiotics to the animals and subjecting them to inhumane treatment and rampant disease, these industrial farms also promote the use of pesticides, hormones, genetically engineered crops, and other environmental atrocities. They're also notorious polluters.

Instead, the most environmentally conscious choice of all is to feed your pet a high-quality species-appropriate diet. Look for pet foods that contain organic, whole-food ingredients without added antibiotics, sourced from naturally raised meat and poultry or wild-caught fish.

Support responsible pet-food companies that respect the environment and also the health of your pet. You can even consider making a balanced, fresh food diet for your pets with homegrown ingredients from your garden, local farmer's market, or food co-op.

If you want to give it a try, make your own jerky chicken strips made from free-range organic (and therefore antibiotic-free) chicken. Finally, remember that antibiotic-resistant disease is a problem in pets just as it is in people.

In addition to feeding your pet antibiotic-free organic food, you can lower his risk of antibiotic-resistant disease by only using antibiotics when they're absolutely necessary. Many veterinarians may overprescribe antibiotics to pets.

Even if your pet has an infection it's a good idea to request a culture and sensitivity test to determine exactly what type of bacteria is involved and, if medication is necessary, uncover the best drug to treat it rather than using a "hit-or-miss" approach.

Sources and References

[1] CAFOtheBook.org, Poultry Prisons

[2] New York Times May 15, 2015

[3, 5] Mother Jones May 20, 2015

[4] New York Times April 28, 2015

[6] Reuters September 7, 2015