

E.U. REASSURES ITS CONSUMERS ABOUT AI

EUROPEAN UNION: The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) publishes a scientific report on avian influenza and food safety.

The European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA's) Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards is reassuring consumers that there is no danger that avian influenza can be transmitted to humans by eating poultry meat.

The reassurance comes in a scientific report on food as a possible source of infection with highly-pathogenic avian influenza viruses for humans and other mammals, published last week. This comprehensive scientific document analyzes whether consuming food contaminated with highly-pathogenic avian influenza virus could initiate infection in mammals via the digestive route.

The report examines in detail existing data on avian influenza, in general, and the H5N1 strain, in particular, studying various aspects of the virus's transmission in relation to the food and the gastrointestinal tract. It supports EFSA's previously published advice on avian influenza in relation to food safety.

"On present evidence, humans who have acquired the infection have been in direct contact with infected live or dead birds," the report relays. "There is no epidemiological evidence to date that avian influenza can be transmitted to humans through consumption of food, notably poultry and eggs."

The report continues: "EFSA and other organizations, such as the World Health Organization, generally support long-standing food-safety advice that chicken and eggs be properly cooked in order to protect consumers from possible risks of food poisoning. Thoroughly cooking poultry meat and eggs also eliminates viruses, thereby providing further safety assurance in the unlikely event that H5N1 virus be present in raw poultry products entering the food chain."

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