

Avian influenza **Technical Advisory Group** established

Although no avian influenza viruses of regulatory concern have been detected in New Zealand, recent events in Europe and Africa underscore their potential impacts.

Biosecurity New Zealand has comprehensive response plans and policies for avian influenza (see article on page 16 of this issue, outlining MAF planning).

In order to ensure independent scientific input by New Zealand experts outside MAF, Peter Thomson, Chief Technical Officer (CTO) Post-clearance has established a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to support MAF's *Technical Response Policies for Avian Influenza Viruses of Regulatory Concern*.

New Zealand specialists named to the TAG are:

- **Lance Jennings**, a Clinical Virologist with the Canterbury District Health Board, a world influenza expert, WHO

consultant and co-founder of the Asia-Pacific Advisory Committee on Influenza

- **David Melville**, an internationally respected ornithologist and ecologist as well as Honorary Research Fellow, Kadoorie Agricultural Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong
- **Roger Morris** Co-director of EpiCentre, Massey University, an internationally renowned epidemiologist, and an active adviser on avian influenza in Europe and Asia
- **David Marks**, Livestock Solutions, a poultry veterinary specialist with 22 years' experience in Australia and New Zealand.

The first meeting of the TAG is scheduled for the end of March. Once underway it is proposed that the group meets every six months.

For further detail on the biology, ecology, detection and potential impacts of AI viruses see *Biosecurity* issue 50:6, 15 March 2004.

- Susan Keenan, Senior Policy Analyst, Biosecurity New Zealand, phone 04 819 0408, susan.keenan@maf.govt.nz
- Dorothy Geale DVM PhD BSc(Hons), Senior Adviser Surveillance and Response, Biosecurity New Zealand, phone 04 819 0544, dorothy.geale@maf.govt.nz