

**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care**

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**Ministère de la Santé
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MEMORANDUM TO: Medical officers of health, health sector employers and health care workers

FROM: Clint Shingler, Director, Health System Emergency Management Branch

RE: Situational update on the avian influenza A(H7N9) virus and Middle East Respiratory Coronavirus

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (ministry) continues to collaborate with Public Health Ontario, the Ministry of Labour and the Public Health Agency of Canada to monitor the risk posed by the Asian lineage avian influenza A(H7N9) virus in China and by Middle East Respiratory Coronavirus (MERS-CoV).

There are a number of avian influenza A(H7N9) virus strains circulating globally. Regarding Asian lineage avian influenza A(H7N9), the World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that the number of human infections and geographical distribution in the fifth epidemic wave (i.e., onset since October 1, 2016) is greater than in earlier waves. While recent situation updates indicate that the infection rate has begun to decline, the WHO continues to emphasize that intensive surveillance and control measures in both the human and animal health sector are crucial.

Given this evolving situation, the ministry has revised its [situational update](#) and encourages health care workers and health sector employers to review the updated [guidance on avian influenza A\(H7N9\)](#) – now focused on Asian lineage, including the case definitions, testing recommendations, occupational health & safety and infection prevention & control guidance, and a new section on contact management.

Regarding MERS-CoV, new cases continue to be reported to the WHO, including human-to-human transmissions in health care and close contact settings. Laboratory-confirmed cases remain primarily in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with a few cases reported in nearby countries in the region. I encourage you to review the

ministry's [guidance on Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus](#). This updated guidance includes some clarifications on the case definitions.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact the ministry's Health System Emergency Management Branch by email at emergencymanagement.moh@ontario.ca or by phone at 1-866-212-2272.

Thank you for your continued awareness as these situations continue to evolve.

Original signed by

Clint Shingler

cc. Roselle Martino, Assistant Deputy Minister, Population and Public Health
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health