

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit

MEDIA RELEASE:

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Health Unit clarifies meaning of WHO “phase 5” alert

The World Health Organization (WHO) has increased their Pandemic alert to Phase 5. The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit felt it was important to clarify that the move to phase 5 does not indicate that the disease is more serious. It indicates that the virus is spreading further.

WHO Pandemic Phases

- **Phase 1:** A virus in animals has caused no known infections in humans.
- **Phase 2:** An animal flu virus has caused infection in humans.
- **Phase 3:** Sporadic cases or small clusters of disease occur in humans. Human-to-human transmission, if any, is insufficient to cause community-level outbreaks.
- **Phase 4:** The risk for a pandemic is greatly increased but not certain. The disease-causing virus is able to cause community-level outbreaks.
- **Phase 5:** Human-to-human spread of the virus is in at least two countries in one WHO region. While most countries will not be affected at this stage, the declaration of Phase 5 is a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication, and implementation of the planned mitigation measures is short.
- **Phase 6:** This is the pandemic level. Community-level outbreaks are in at least one additional country in a different WHO region from phase 5. A global pandemic is under way.

For more information on the WHO alert phases, visit their website:
http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/phase/en/index.html.

Public are encouraged to visit the health unit website – www.healthunit.org or call 1-800-660-5853 for more information.

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Contact: Dr. Anne Carter, Medical Officer of Health, Jane Fitcher, Director of Clinical Services or Susan Healey, Communications Co-ordinator at 613-345-5685