

## **Safety Talk: Avian Flu and Bird Shipments**

The recent outbreak of avian flu in Asia and Europe has many employees asking what kinds of birds are mailable and what safety precautions the U.S. government is taking to make sure the bird flu doesn't spread to the United States.

Day-old baby poultry and certain types of adult birds are mailable — provided the conditions of the *Domestic Mail Manual* and Publication 52, *Hazardous, Restricted, Or Perishable Matter* are met. This includes using biologically-secure containers to prevent exposure to postal employees.

U.S. government officials are taking steps to make sure the bird flu outbreak caused by the H5N1 virus in Asia and Europe doesn't spread to the United States. These include:

- Prohibiting the importation of live birds and hatching eggs from H5N1 affected countries.
- Requiring poultry product imports from East and Southeast Asia to be processed or cooked in accordance with a USDA permit to lower the viral contamination risk to negligible levels before they can be imported.
- Requiring all imported birds be quarantined at a USDA bird-quarantine facility and tested for the avian influenza virus before entering the country. This requirement now covers returning U.S.-origin pet birds. (Source: USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service).

According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the current risk to Americans from the H5N1 bird flu outbreak in Asia is low. The strain of H5N1 virus found in Asia and Europe hasn't been found in the United States and there have been no human cases of H5N1 flu in the United States.

The Postal Service is closely monitoring the avian flu situation and consulting with government health and agricultural officials on what is being done to protect employees and the public.