

Scientists develop bird flu vaccine

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University of Pittsburgh scientists say they've genetically engineered an avian flu vaccine that has proven 100 percent effective in mice and chickens.

The vaccine was produced from the critical components of the deadly H5N1 virus that has devastated bird populations in Southeast Asia and Europe and has killed more than 80 people.

Since the newly developed vaccine contains a live virus, researchers say it may be more immune-activating than avian flu vaccines prepared by traditional methods. Furthermore, because it is grown in cells, it can be produced much more quickly than traditional vaccines, thereby making it an extremely attractive candidate for preventing the spread of the virus in domestic livestock populations and, potentially, in humans.

"The results of this animal trial are very promising, not only because our vaccine completely protected animals that otherwise would have died, but also because we found that one form of the vaccine stimulates several lines of immunity against H5N1," said Dr. Andrea Gambotto, an assistant professor and lead author of the study.

The research is detailed in the Feb 15 issue of the Journal of Virology and made available early online.

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