

The expansion of the indication and occupational recommendation for seasonal influenza vaccination in Germany: an evidence review by the Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO)

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Background

Seasonal, porcine and avian influenza A viruses are endemic in many species and countries. Due to the potential of influenza viruses to exchange whole genome sequences, new influenza virus variants arise when animals or humans are at the same time infected with two different strains. New reassorted virus strains could have pandemic potential.

Methods

Following its standard procedure, STIKO reviewed evidence on disease burden and risk of co-infections of influenza viruses in humans. A nationwide survey was conducted across all 16 federal states of Germany on how many people in an occupational or private setting are exposed to animals (livestock, wild animals) which could be infected with avian or porcine influenza.

Results

The results from the survey showed that approximately 850,000 people occupied in companies working with poultry, swine or wild birds are potentially exposed to avian or porcine influenza virus. In Germany, between 2007 and 2020 six infections with porcine influenza have been described, none with avian influenza. In 2023/2024 16 spillover infections of the A(H5Nx)-variant have been recorded in mammals in Germany (e.g. foxes, racoons or seals).

Conclusion

To reduce risks of new reassorted influenza virus strains, STIKO decided in 2025 to extend its recommendation for seasonal influenza vaccination to people with prolonged and repeated private or occupational contact with animals potentially infected with avian or porcine influenza.

Keywords

Professional status of the speaker

Senior Scientist

Junior scientist status

No, I am not a junior scientist.

Registration ID

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