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# Foreword

Although H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus has been known for over a decade, the enormous impact of outbreaks in poultry across Asia, Africa and Europe since 2003, as well as deaths in over 200 humans, over 230 million poultry and thousands of wild birds, has made H5N1 HPAI and “bird flu” a part of common daily parlance. However, the expression ‘highly pathogenic avian influenza’ is a chicken term, and should really not be used to describe the infection in other species (wild ducks, tigers, ferrets, or humans), even though the infection can be highly virulent in many species of animals. We prefer to call these infections AI virus infections or influenza viral infections of avian origin.

In response to the geographic spread of H5N1 and the deaths it has caused in wild bird populations to various degrees, as well as the concern that certain species of wild birds may play a role in the introduction and dissemination of the H5N1 virus along their flyways, FAO has been particularly interested to understand the interactions between wild and domestic birds. Within the Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD), FAO has established a Wildlife Disease Programme to promote regional cooperation and action and increase in-country national and regional capacity building through the training and education of biologists, veterinarians, ornithologists and others to better integrate a common understanding of pathogen transmission in affected environments. To support this work, it produced a Manual entitled *Wild Bird Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Surveillance – sample collection from healthy, sick and dead birds* in 2006.

There is a wide variety of manuals available to understand the intricacies of the ecology and life cycles of wild bird species, including the wide spectrum of food and foraging habits, social interactions, migration strategies, nesting choices, habitat use. However, it was immediately apparent to FAO and other partners that there is a need for an introductory manual to support field efforts with regard to the study of bird populations and ecological aspects of avian influenza viruses. The topics covered in this Manual address monitoring technologies and sampling techniques, wild bird surveillance, some features of habitat use and migration ecology that are all important aspects of wildlife and disease ecology that need to be better researched.

This Manual is a collaborative effort of FAO, the Agricultural Research Centre for International Development of France (CIRAD), BirdLife International, Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, United States Geological Survey (USGS), Wetlands International, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, UK (WWT) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

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FAO encourages feedback and comments on this Manual.

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