

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Literacy Lab #2: Scientists and the Bird Flu Living Environment: Comet 2011-2012

### **“U.S. Bio-Security Officials Sound Warning After Scientists Create Deadly New Strain of Bird Flu”**

**Directions:** Take a few minutes to read the article below either online (or on the back of this page.) Write responses to the statements or questions below. Cut/copy/paste is not allowed – use your own words and thoughts, based in research if needed.

Read more: <http://www.foxnews.com/health/2011/12/20/scientists-spark-fears-by-creating-highly-contagious-airborne-strain-bird-flu/print#ixzz1h5dHOJpv>

**Fact-finding:** List three facts that you learned in this article.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Vocabulary:** List and define three unfamiliar words in the space below.

**Implications:** What are your feelings about this “discovery”? Express your feelings (tactfully) about whether this is an advancement of science or a bad idea.

# U.S. Bio-Security Officials Sound Warning After Scientists Create Deadly New Strain of Bird Flu

Published December 20, 2011

The U.S. government is sounding the alarm after reports that Dutch scientists have created a highly-contagious and deadly airborne strain of bird flu that is potentially capable of killing millions, The Independent reported Tuesday.



The U.S. National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity is currently analyzing how much of the scientists' information should be allowed to be published—given the inherent risks of having the information fall into the hands of terrorists or rogue states.

"The fear is that if you create something this deadly and it goes into a global pandemic, the mortality and cost to the world could be massive," a senior US government adviser told The Independent.

Scientists, too, are questioning whether the science should ever have been performed in the first place.

"There are people who say that the work should never have been done, or if it was done it should have been done in a setting where the information could be better controlled," a source close to the US biosecurity board told the newspaper.

"With influenza now it is possible to reverse engineer the virus. It's pretty common technology in many parts of the world. With the genomic sequence, you can reconstruct it. That's where the information is dangerous."

The mutated form of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza was created by a Dutch team of scientists led by Ron Fouchier, of Rotterdam's Erasmus Medical Centre, and the researchers are now hoping to publish the details of how they developed the new strain.

The new virus differs from H5N1—which is only known to be transmitted between humans who have very close contact with each other—because it can be transmitted through the air in coughs and sneezes.

Fouchier, who declined to answer The Independent's questions, said in a statement that it only took a small number of mutations to change the avian flu virus.

"We have discovered that this is indeed possible, and more easily than previously thought. In the laboratory, it was possible to change H5N1 into an aerosol-transmissible virus that can easily be rapidly spread through the air," he said.

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