

Study: Live H5N1 virus vaccines effective

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U.S. scientists say live, weakened versions of differing strains of avian flu viruses have offered protection when tested in mice and ferrets.

Researchers say their findings are encouraging because they demonstrate the ability to create a vaccine based on one particular strain of the H5N1 flu virus that could potentially protect against different emerging H5N1 flu strains.

"If an influenza pandemic were imminent or under way, we would need a vaccine that could stimulate immunity quickly, preferably with a single dose," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. "The encouraging findings of this study suggest vaccines based on live, but weakened, versions of the H5N1 avian influenza virus may quickly stimulate protective immunity.

"We are further exploring this live, attenuated vaccine strategy as one of several tools that we hope to have available in the event of an influenza pandemic," he added.

Senior investigator Dr. Kanta Subbarao and co-chief investigator Dr. Brian Murphy explain the research in the Sept. 12 issue of PLoS Medicine.

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