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Industry News - AM **GM chicken conquers bird flu**

By John Strak on 1/18/2011

Chickens genetically modified to prevent them spreading bird flu have been produced by researchers at The Roslin Institute of the University of Edinburgh in Scotland and the University of Cambridge in England. The study is published in the journal *Science*.

The scientists have developed genetically modified (transgenic) chickens that do not transmit avian influenza virus to other chickens with which they are in contact. This genetic modification has the potential to stop bird flu outbreaks spreading within poultry flocks. This would not only protect the health of domestic poultry but could also reduce the risk of bird flu epidemics leading to new flu virus epidemics in the human population.

"Chickens are potential bridging hosts that can enable new strains of flu to be transmitted to humans. Preventing virus transmission in chickens should reduce the economic impact of the disease and reduce the risk posed to people exposed to the infected birds. The genetic modification we describe is a significant first step along the path to developing chickens that are completely resistant to avian flu," said Dr. Laurence Tiley, Senior Lecturer in Molecular Virology from the University of Cambridge, Department of Veterinary Medicine.

"The results achieved in this study are very encouraging. Using genetic modification to introduce genetic changes that cannot be achieved by animal breeding demonstrates the potential of GM to improve animal welfare in the poultry industry. This work could also form the basis for improving economic and food security in many regions of the world where bird flu is a significant problem," added Professor Helen Sang, from The Roslin Institute.

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