

Session 12

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HPAI risk perception of poultry keepers within the traditional poultry sector in Egypt

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Egypt has experienced one of the worst outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outside Asia. Since the first outbreak of HPAI in 2006, the government has adopted several mechanisms to limit the spread of HPAI and the risk of human infection. This study used a mixed method approach in investigating levels of risk perceptions and underlying believes and rationales. For this study 140 female poultry keepers within the traditional poultry sector in Egypt were interviewed. Levels of risk perceptions were collected by means of a three point Likert-scale. Scores for perceived likelihood of human infection, likelihood of flock infection, severity of flock infection and level of fear for flock infection were collected. Risk perception scores were tested against the following variables: flock size, number of household member, location, education and the number of self reported outbreaks during 2006-2010. Correlation tests were performed using SPSS version 18. The results showed no associations between perceived risk and flock size, number of household members, education and location. However, there was a correlation between high-risk scores and the number of outbreaks already experienced by the household. This is in line with current risk theory, which predicts a positive association between the memorability of an event and perceived risk scores. Further, qualitative data analyses revealed some interesting underlying believes. High-risk perceptions were associated among others with a believe that HPAI can be transmitted through air. Low-risk perceptions were associated with no previous human infections in the village and skepticism about human susceptibility to HPAI among others. Understanding and targeting these underlying believes and norms might be more effective in supporting behavior change than simply dictating behavior changes.