

Canadian Airport Dogs Aid in Avian Flu Detection

Travelers arriving from Europe may be more likely to be inspected by airport dogs.

In an effort to keep the H5N1 bird flu strain from entering Canada, customs officials have enlisted the help of dogs to sniff out any feathers or bird products stored in bags or to detect bird droppings that may have attached to peoples shoes or clothing, said senior veterinarian Jim Clark of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in The Toronto Star.

Were relying on a bit of an honor system but the dogs are keeping people honest too, Dr. Clark said.

Security inspections have especially increased at entry points for travelers arriving from Europe, especially France.

We've asked the customs agency to have a higher awareness of anyone coming from any countries in Europe, not just the ones with isolations that have been identified, Clark said.

Animal health experts said that the greatest potential for spreading the disease to Canada now comes from international travel, not the flyways of migratory birds, according to The Toronto Star.

Posted: March 2, 2006, 5 a.m. EST