Reviewer's report

Title: Protective measures and H5N1-seroprevalence among personnel tasked with bird collection during an outbreak of avian influenza A/H5N1 in wild birds, Ruegen, Germany, 2006

Version: 1 Date: 25 May 2009

Reviewer: Tania Winzenberg

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written paper in an area of high topical interest.
My comments are minor in nature only.

Methods
1. Page 4. Study participants – can the authors provide any estimate of the number of soldiers, out of area fireman who were excluded from the study?
2. Page 5. Data collection – more detail is required of the questions asked /items of information elicited by the questionnaire. These in part emerge in the results section but should be given in the methods explicitly.
3. Page 5 PPE use. Please justify the choice of weighting of PPE use items with supporting evidence.
4. Did the questionnaire include any assessment of training given to the participants? This would have been useful.
5. Typographical error Page 5, under serological testing “unfrigerated” should be “unrefrigerated”

Results
6. The % of participants who were male is very high. Does this reflect the exclusions made or just the reality of the demographics of the workforce involved?
7. What is meant by government workers eg office staff or outdoor workers etc?
8. Page 7 Conditions of wild bird collection – this could be reported entirely as text, and omit the table 2. As it stands, the reporting is repetitious.
9. I note the low response rate of the fireman compared to other groups as well as their high PPE use. Could response bias explain this finding? Perhaps fireman taking aprt in the study were more highly motivated and interested and used PPE more intensively than their non-responding colleagues? This should be addressed specifically in the limitations in the discussion
10. Page 8 Results for problems using PPE are given but this is not mentioned in the methods. Again, a clear and detailed description of the questionnaire items should be given in the methods.
11. Is there data on how many participants were offered but did not accept
seasonal influenza vaccination in Feb 2006, and if so any data on why they chose to accept or not accept this offer?

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'