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:** 19 July 2009

**Reviewer:** Christian Sandrock

**Reviewer's report:**

Overall, this manuscript is a straightforward and well written study evaluating the PPE compliance rate among wild bird handlers during the H5N1 outbreak in Northern Germany. Most handlers wore some form of PPE and this level varied among fireman (highest) and government workers (lowest). Upon confirmation, no handlers had H5 + serology although 5 individuals did have PN + results that were confirmed negative with MN, suggesting a N-1 cross-reactivity with seasonal H1N1.

This paper is important since it adds to the base literature on exposure and seroconversion among avian influenza, particularly in a western country where appropriate training and equipment is readily available (lower risk country). It is well written with few grammatical errors. The statistical and methodological approaches are good. Depending on the editors comments, I think this manuscript would add to the body of work currently available. I have 2 additional points:

1. The compliance for PPE with mask based on the scoring system was lowest for masks, one of the 3 most important items along with gloves and gown. What kind of mask was used? Did this score appear to differ when looking at various brands of mask (e.g. N-95 vs surgical)? If you do not have this data, what do you make of this lower compliance and what would you recommend governmental or response agencies do?

2. Your overall H5 rate was 8.4% among about 1880 birds tested. That is only about 160 birds in total with H5, with many responders probably never having been in contact with H5. How does that effect your study? If you screened for H5 plus other low path AI viruses, would that have enhanced your study? Plus, what condition were the birds when they were handled (deceased?). This biggest exposure comes with live handling unless you are consuming a dead bird, so how does that effect your low rate. Please comment.

**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.