



## The OFFLU Scientist

Dr Mia Kim is the OFFLU Scientist.

Dr Kim is an American veterinarian with a diverse background in molecular biology and diagnostics, epidemiology, and biosecurity. Research at the USDA Southeast Poultry Research Laboratory (SEPR) included the use of bioinformatics to study the genomic variability and phylogenetic relationships among Newcastle disease virus and avian influenza (AIV) and rapid diagnostic assay evaluation and development.

In her current role with FAO and OFFLU she serves to catalyse working relationships and data sharing among laboratories and support efforts to standardise laboratory protocols; compile and analyse epidemiologic and molecular data from partner laboratories from avian influenza viruses; perform needs assessment for laboratories in developing countries; provide in-country training in diagnostic laboratory techniques, sequence analysis, and bioinformatics; and assist with the extension epidemiologic databases to include viral genetic information.



Dr Kim has been working technically at the country level for much of the year to address specific issues of concern in the animal health sector and to increase capacity in certain countries. Emergency laboratory assistance as part of CMC missions in response to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 emergence in Nepal (February 2009) and pandemic H1N1 2009 in Mexico (May 2009) were provided, and the OFFLU vaccine efficacy project in Indonesia has been implemented (including, specifically, project advocacy with the Ministry of Agriculture, bench training to Indonesian laboratories, procurement for supplies and equipment, and coordinating introductory workshops for 35 Indonesian scientists on molecular and antigenic analysis). These projects have been augmented technically through collaboration with laboratory project partners in the US, Australia, and the Netherlands, including cooperative review and analysis of project data on antigenic and genetic virus characterization, including pioneering the use of antigenic cartography for avian sera.

A similar national project on HPAI H5N1 poultry vaccine efficacy has now been initiated in Egypt. The FAO OFFLU focal point, G. Dauphin, and Dr Kim have already coordinated training with SEPR (USA), developed lists of laboratory procurement, and worked on upgrading of animal facilities. The first technical meeting for vaccine efficacy in Egypt is scheduled 30 September–1 October 2009.