

## Deadly viruses that target chickens can spill over into humans. Gene editing is a solution — if activists don't block rollout

Diseases such as avian flu trigger the culling of millions of birds each year. But that need not be the case for much longer.

Vaccines are one preventive strategy employed in some countries, but they do not stop birds from being infected, getting mild versions of the disease and transmitting it to healthy chickens.

Follow the latest news and policy debates on sustainable agriculture, biomedicine, and other 'disruptive' innovations. Subscribe to our newsletter.

[SIGN UP](#)

And an even more grim possibility is that the viruses that afflict domestic birds can spill over into humans with deadly effect.

So scientists are working on a more permanent solution: gene editing, which is designed to alter specific genes in an organism to enhance certain characteristics or inhibit others.

...

Even as the science marches on, the commercial case for any such progress is handicapped by the lack of a global regulatory consensus and consumer acceptance, the scientists said.

We have the tools required to develop disease-resistant chickens, but it's important to bring the public along with the journey, says [virologist Laurence] Tiley. "If somebody jumps into a room and shouts fire, people tend to respond. And so, if somebody says GM food is dangerous, people tend to take that at face value," he says.

[\*\*This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.\*\*](#)