

Baxter signs British flu vaccine deal

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Baxter International said it has entered into an agreement to supply Britain with flu vaccine in the event of a bird flu pandemic.

The Deerfield, Ill., company is in the final stages of testing for a vaccine against H5N1 strains of avian influenza.

Baxter said it will manufacture its pandemic vaccine in a serum-free, vero cell-based system that accelerates vaccine availability. The company said vaccines produced using this process can be released within approximately 12 weeks, significantly earlier than with traditional egg-based systems.

The vero cell culture gives the company the flexibility to quickly respond to emerging variant pandemic virus strains, Baxter said in a news release.

The Chicago Tribune said the advanced supply agreement could be worth tens of millions of dollars to the company over the next four years.

British health officials said they signed more than \$300 million in contracts with Baxter and GlaxoSmithKline to supply a vaccine as soon as the strain is identified by the World Health Organization.

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