

AVIAN (BIRD) FLU – Highly Pathogenic Asian Influenza H5N1 (HPAI)

Commonly known as avian influenza or bird flu, it is a disease that currently concerns many people.

Avian influenza (AI) occurs naturally in North America in a form that does not affect humans (Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza, or LPAI). **The disease that has affected humans in other countries, (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza or HPAI) is not currently found in North America.**

In the worldwide bird population, avian influenza is most often found in waterbirds, such as waterfowl and shorebirds (geese, ducks, swans, and sandpiper-type birds). However, **there are no documented cases of the disease ever being transmitted to humans from wild birds.** (From domestic birds, yes; but not from wild birds.)



Waterbirds commonly found in Indiana (top left to bottom right): Canada goose, mallard duck, mute swan, spotted sandpiper.

However, if you find any dead migratory geese, ducks, swans, or shorebirds, **DO NOT PICK THE BIRDS UP FOR TESTING.** Please call the Wildlife Conflicts Information Hotline at **1-800-893-4116** to report the location and number of dead waterfowl. Indiana Department of Natural Resources and Wildlife Services professional staff will determine if testing is necessary.

Indiana resident geese and ducks do not migrate a significant distance, so are not at risk for initial exposure to HPAI and are not a priority in the surveillance program. For a checklist of birds in Indiana, visit <http://www.wbu.com/chipperwoods/checklist.htm>.

To dispose of dead birds: **DO NOT** handle with your bare hands. If you do need to dispose of a dead bird, use gloves or a plastic bag turned inside-out over your hand to pick up the bird, double bag it, and either bury it or dispose of it in the trash.



1) Locate dead bird; 2) Place hand inside plastic bag; 3) Open plastic bag with both hands inside; 4) Pick up dead bird; 5) While holding bird, turn bag inside out over bird; 6) Tie bag closed; 7) Place bagged bird inside second plastic bag; 8) Tie second bag closed.

Questions and Answers from the CDC

What is avian influenza (bird flu)?

It is an infection caused by avian influenza viruses. These flu viruses occur naturally among birds. Wild birds worldwide carry the viruses in their intestines, but usually do not get sick from them. However, avian influenza is very contagious among birds, and can make some domesticated birds, including chickens, ducks, and turkeys, very sick and kill them. The “highly pathogenic” form can spread rapidly through flocks of poultry; the mortality rate can reach 90-100%, often within 48 hours.

How does avian influenza spread among birds?

Infected birds shed the virus in their saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. Domesticated birds may become infected through direct contact with infected birds, or through contact with surfaces (such as dirt or cages) or materials (such as water or feed) that have been contaminated.

Do avian influenza viruses infect humans?

Bird flu viruses do not usually infect humans, but more than 190 confirmed cases of human infection have occurred since 1997 (none in the US). The World Health Organization (WHO) maintains reports of human cases at http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/en/index.html.

How do people become infected with avian influenza viruses?

Most cases in humans have come from direct or close contact with infected poultry (e.g., domesticated chickens, ducks, and

turkeys) or surfaces contaminated with secretions and excretions from infected birds. The spread of avian influenza viruses from an ill person to another person has been reported very rarely, and transmission has not been observed to continue beyond one person.

What are the symptoms of avian influenza in humans?

Symptoms have ranged from typical flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches) to eye infections, pneumonia, severe respiratory diseases (acute respiratory distress syndrome), and other severe and life threatening complications. Symptoms may depend on which specific virus subtype and strain caused the infection.

What are the implications of avian influenza to human health?

Two main risks are: 1) the risk of infection directly from birds to humans; and, 2) the risk that the virus will mutate (change) into a form that is highly infectious for humans and spreads easily from person to person. (see artwork on front cover.)

How is avian influenza in humans treated?

Lab studies suggest that prescription medications approved for human influenza viruses should work. However, flu viruses can become resistant to these drugs, so even these medications don't always work. Additional studies are needed.

Does the flu shot I get in the fall/winter protect me from avian influenza?

No.

Can I get avian influenza from eating or preparing poultry or eggs?

You cannot get bird flu from eating properly handled and cooked poultry and eggs.

We have a small flock of chickens. Is it safe to keep them?

Yes.

What precautions can be taken to reduce the risk for infection from wild birds in the US?

As a general rule, the public should observe wildlife, including wild birds, from a distance. Avoid touching wildlife.

What precautions can hunters take when hunting birds in the US?

The National Wildlife Health Center recommends:

- Do not handle or eat sick game.
- Wear disposable gloves while handling and cleaning game, wash hands with soap and water, and thoroughly clean knives, equipment and surfaces that come in contact with game.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling animals.
- Cook all game thoroughly.

Can a person be infected with H5N1 by cleaning a bird feeder?

There is no evidence of this. Most of the wild birds associated with avian flu are waterfowl and shorebirds.

If you find ANY dead bird, call the Harrison County Health Department at 812-738-3237.

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* speculation – this has not happened