

The Bird Flu and You:



GET THE FACTS ABOUT

Bird Flu

H5N1

Avian Influenza



Many birds in several parts of the world are getting sick from a type of avian influenza, which is sometimes called “bird flu.” There are many different bird flu viruses, and some strains are more severe than others. A virus is pathogenic if it can cause illness and death. Bird flu viruses that cause lots of bird illnesses and deaths are called highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) viruses. Most bird flu viruses only infect birds, but some bird flu can infect people. The HPAI H5N1 bird flu virus is highly contagious between birds, but hard for people to catch.

If this HPAI H5N1 bird flu arrives in the United States, it does not mean that a lot of people will get sick. People usually must have very close contact with infected birds to be at risk. However, even in the absence of bird flu, you should avoid close contact with wild birds.

Practice hygiene and safety measures to help protect you and your family from sick or dead birds.

People who have close contact with wild birds, like researchers and hunters, should protect themselves using some basic sanitary practices.

As a rule, no one should pick up dead or sick birds and animals unless he or she is trained in handling animals. However, anyone who does come into contact with a dead or sick bird or animal should always wear gloves and wash their hands thoroughly afterwards.



Regularly clean bird feeders and birdbaths.

Birds are carriers of a number of diseases that can be transmitted to people, so it is important to clean birdbaths and bird feeders as recommended by the Audubon Society and the USGS National Wildlife Health Center. Bird feeders should be cleaned monthly with a solution of nine parts water to one part bleach to help get rid of bacteria and mold spores in plastic, ceramic and metal feeders.



A solution of three parts water to one part vinegar or unscented biodegradable soap can be used on wooden bird feeders. Also, sweep away and discard droppings and seed hulls from around the base of feeders. Change the water and clean birdbaths every two to three days to avoid algae build up and prevent mosquitoes from breeding. Mosquitoes can infect people with another disease, the West Nile virus.

Follow the recommended procedures if you find a dead bird in your yard.

There is no need to report a single dead bird unless it is a crow. If you find a dead crow, please call **1-866-537-BIRD**. Dead crow reports are important to help track the West Nile virus, but most crows do not need to be picked up or tested.

Other birds should not be reported unless there are many dead birds in the same area. Call your regional Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) office if you see many dead birds in the same location, especially migratory waterfowl. The DEC will be able to determine if testing needs to be done. The vast majority of backyard birds – robins, sparrows, pigeons, cardinals, etc. – do not need to be reported or tested.

If you must dispose of a dead bird, use a shovel and wear gloves to double-bag the dead bird. Then, throw it out in the trash, or bury it at least three feet deep, away from a stream or other water source. Always wash your hands after disposing of a dead bird in this way.

Facts about HPAI H5N1 Bird Flu.

Bird flu is not the same as pandemic flu.

- A pandemic is a worldwide outbreak and would affect people around the world.
- Pandemic flu spreads easily from person to person.

Bird flu is hard for people to catch.

- Most people who were infected with bird flu in other parts of the world were in direct contact with infected chickens and ducks. Some people lived in areas with chickens and ducks that had bird flu.
- Bird flu can also be transmitted by touching things that had droppings from infected birds on them.
- Thoroughly cooking meat kills the bird flu virus.

How you can learn more.

For updates on the HPAI H5N1 bird flu, go to www.avianflu.gov and other web resources listed on the back of this brochure.

Remember:

- The HPAI H5N1 virus that is spreading in Asia, Europe and Africa is not yet in the United States or the Western Hemisphere.
- Following proper health and safety measures can reduce the risk of catching diseases carried by birds.
- Bird flu currently does not easily infect people.
- Scientists are watching HPAI H5N1 very closely for any changes that may affect people and birds.

Government agencies are working to safeguard our health through many activities. Our federal government has a new early detection program for the flu virus in wild birds. Officials are testing, monitoring and sampling birds in key locations.

The risk of the HPAI H5N1 virus arriving in New York is also reduced by federal laws restricting bird imports and by regular monitoring by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM). This agency checks for avian influenza in live poultry markets and commercial and backyard poultry farms.

Web Resources

New York State Department of Health

<http://www.nyhealth.gov>

**New York State Department of Agriculture
and Markets**

<http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us>

**New York State Department of
Environmental Conservation**

<http://www.dec.state.ny.us>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.avianflu.gov>

Centers for Disease Control bird flu page

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian>

**World Health Organization updates and
further links**

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/updates/en/index.html



H5N1 Avian Influenza



State of New York
Eliot Spitzer, Governor
Department of Health