

Avian Influenza (BIRD) FLU

What is avian influenza (bird) flu?

Avian influenza, popularly known as bird flu, is a virus that is easily passed between birds and can be found in chickens and wild birds. Some of the birds include: Cranes, raptors, swans, ducks and geese. Avian influenza can also be found in some mammals like foxes, bears, cats and dogs. It would be very rare for a human to have avian influenza viruses but precautions are still recommended.

Prevention

The risk of Avian flu in humans from birds and mammals is low.

Hunters should follow these recommendations to be cautious to reduce the risk of disease and prevent the spread of the virus:

- wear disposable gloves
- work in a ventilated environment or out of doors
- wash your hands with soap and warm running water frequently
- try not to touch your face/nose/eyes and mouth, and do not eat, drink, or smoke while cleaning animals
- pets and children should not be near carcasses and tools for cleaning/harvesting animals – do not feed pets carcass scraps
- clean and disinfect equipment, and
- clean and disinfect tools and surfaces with soapy water, and then use a household bleach solution (25 ml or 5 tsp bleach to 2 L or 8 cups water)
- when harvesting is complete, wash or change clothing

Fully cooked, healthy mammal and waterfowl meat and eggs are safe to eat.

Do not handle wild mammals or birds found dead or live birds or mammals that appear sick. If you must handle a sick bird, use disposable gloves and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water.

Getting your seasonal flu shot will lower the risk of getting human and avian influenza at the same time, and help prevent the development of new viruses.

If you become ill with influenza symptoms after handling wild birds, wild bird eggs or other wildlife, contact your local health centre as soon as possible and inform them you have been in contact with wildlife.

Symptoms in birds

Not all ill birds will have symptoms. Those that do may appear with head and eye swelling, not move much, have poor coordination and/or tremors, they may gasp for air or cough or sneeze. Some may have diarrhea or suddenly die. Keep a lookout for multiple dead birds in one spot, it may mean avian flu is in your area.



What is the risk to other animals?

The risk of other animals catching avian influenza from wild birds is low; however, dogs and wild carnivores (e.g., foxes, mink, bears and seals) can also become ill from eating infected bird carcasses or from exposure to heavily contaminated environments. It is a good practice for hunters and trappers to be careful when handling wild carnivores, and to prevent dogs from contacting sick or dead wildlife.



What should you do if you find dead or sick birds?

Do not handle wild birds found dead or birds that are acting strangely. If you must touch a wild bird that was found dead, wear gloves or use a doubled plastic bag. Avoid contact with the bird's body fluids and feces. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or use hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol).

Avian influenza has also been found in other wildlife. You are always encouraged to report sightings of wildlife acting strangely or dead wildlife to your local Conservation Office.



If you see dead birds or birds acting strangely, tell the Conservation Officer in your community.



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Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/polar-knowledge/publications/avian-influenza-in-canada.html>