



What Hunters Should Know About Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

Quick Facts About Avian Influenza and H5N1

- Avian influenza (AI) is an infectious disease of birds caused by type A influenza viruses. Aquatic birds (waterfowl and shorebirds) are considered the natural reservoir of all type A avian influenza viruses.
- Avian influenza virus is common in wild waterfowl and shorebird populations, but usually does not cause disease in these species.
- Some AI viruses cause mild signs in domestic poultry including respiratory disease and this form of AI is called **“Low Pathogenic.”**
- Other AI viruses can cause severe general disease in domestic poultry affecting all body systems resulting in death and this form is called **“High Pathogenic.”**
- Avian influenza viruses can adapt and change over time and since 2002, highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza has caused mortality in domestic poultry and some wild species of ducks, geese, egrets, herons, and gulls in Asia.
- **H5N1 avian influenza has not been found in North America.** There are no reports of positive tests in wild or domestic birds, and no known cases in humans in North America.
- Increasing reports that H5N1 is infecting and causing death in wild birds in Asia, and the spread of H5N1 to new regions in Asia have created concerns that H5N1 virus could be carried to North America by migratory birds. At this time, it is unclear what role wild birds play in the spread of this highly pathogenic avian influenza.
- Avian influenza viruses do not move easily to humans. Most H5N1 infections in humans have resulted from close contact with infected poultry or contaminated materials. As of now, there are no known cases of

human infection from wild birds.



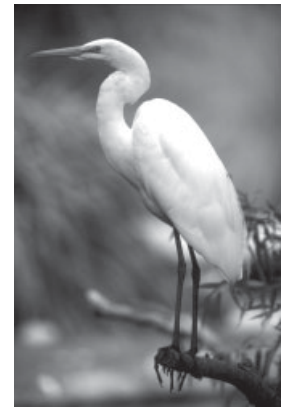
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can humans catch avian influenza from wild birds?

A: There are no known cases of humans getting avian influenza from wild birds, but passing avian influenza from wild birds to humans may be possible. Normally, avian influenza viruses are passed between birds and some types cause numerous deaths in poultry. However, some of these viruses can adapt to forms that can cause infection in humans.

Q: How could H5N1 enter North America?

A: H5N1 is most likely to enter through the movement of infected poultry or illegally imported birds or bird products. Migratory birds, particularly waterfowl and shorebirds, cross the Bering Sea between Alaska and Siberia during their seasonal cycles of breeding and wintering. While in Asia, migratory birds could contact infected domestic or wild birds and bring the virus into the Pacific flyway through migration.



Q: Should bird hunters be concerned about H5N1?

A: Hunters should not be overly concerned at the present time, but should take some common sense precautions about hygiene while hunting. There are no known cases of human H5N1 infection from wild birds, and it is not clear whether H5N1 is persistent in wild bird populations. More research and surveillance over the next year will allow more accurate assessments of risks to Californians.

Q: How can I protect myself from potential bird diseases while hunting?

A: The following suggestions are common sense precautions that hunters should follow normally when hunting:

1. Do not handle birds that are obviously sick or birds found dead.
2. Keep your game birds cool, clean, and dry.
3. Do not eat, drink, or smoke while cleaning your birds.
4. Use rubber gloves when cleaning game.
5. Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol wipes after dressing birds.
6. Clean all tools and surfaces immediately afterward; use hot soapy water, then disinfect with a 10% chlorine bleach solution.
7. Cook game meat thoroughly (155-165°F) to kill disease organisms.

Monitoring for Avian Influenza Viruses in California Birds

The California Department of Fish and Game is in partnership with the University of California, Davis Wildlife Health Center; the California Department of Food and Agriculture; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and the California Department of Health Services to monitor for avian influenza viruses in wild birds. During 2005/2006, hundreds of waterfowl and shorebirds will be tested for avian influenza virus in California. Field sampling efforts will be integrated with surveillance programs throughout the U.S. and Canada.

For More Information about Avian Influenza

For human health information:

National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

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

World Health Organization:

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

For updates on avian influenza monitoring in wild birds in California:

Wildlife Health Center, University of California:

<http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/whc/avianflu.cfm>

National Wildlife Health Center:

http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/research/avian_influenza/avian_influenza.html

Virginia Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine:

<http://www.agnr.umd.edu/avianflu/>

California Department of Fish & Game Offices

Northern California-North Coast Region
(530) 225-2300

Sacramento Valley-Central Sierra Region
(916) 358-2900

Central Coast Region
(707) 944-5500

San Joaquin Valley-Southern Sierra Region
(559) 243-4005

South Coast Region
(858) 467-4201

Eastern Sierra-Inland Deserts Region
(562) 590-5132

Bishop Office
(760) 872-1171

Eureka Office
(707) 445-6493

Visit the California Department of Fish and Game
Online at: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov>

