

Remember, the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus has never been found in New Jersey or North America, but we need your help tracking this virus. If you find sick or dead birds, do not handle them. Instead, please contact the USDA - Wildlife Services to report observations at

**1-866-4-USDA-WS**

## *The Bird Flu: What You Need to Know*

### *The Bird Flu: What is it?*

Bird Flu is another name for Avian Influenza which is a virus that kills birds and rarely affects people.

There are many strains of the virus. They are classified as “low pathogenic” or “high pathogenic”, which refers to the potential for the viruses to kill birds, *not* infect people. The strain that has been in the news most recently is the highly pathogenic Asian strain of the virus, known as H5N1.

*“The highly pathogenic H5N1 virus has never been found in North America...”*

The reason that this strain is of such concern is because it has caused illness and some death in people who were in close contact with infected domestic birds in Asia and Turkey.

Aquatic birds are considered natural reservoirs for any avian influenza viruses. The occurrence of low pathogenic strains of the virus in waterfowl peaks in late summer and early fall but the birds rarely develop the viruses. In shorebirds, the peak occurrence of low pathogenic viruses is during the spring migration.

### *Where Is It Now? What are the symptoms?*

There has been an increasing number of reports of H5N1 infected birds in Asia, Europe and Africa since it was first reported.

It is found mainly in poultry and wild birds, but may be found in some mammals.

The highly pathogenic H5N1 virus has never been found in North America and there are no records of anyone in North America catching the virus from wild birds or other infected animals.

There is no report of wild birds passing this virus to people, but that does not mean it isn't possible. Normally, the virus is passed among bird species. Humans are most likely to contract the virus if they are working in close proximity to infected birds.

If you experience flu-like symptoms contact your doctor for appropriate treatment. Make sure you tell your doctor if you have recently handled or eaten waterfowl or poultry. Symptoms may include fever, sore throat, muscle aches, eye infections, cough, pneumonia and more.



Fish and Wildlife

NJ Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Fish and Wildlife



## The Bird Flu: Preventing Its Spread

The virus is spread through contact with fecal droppings, saliva and nasal discharges of infected animals. It is a problem mostly with domestic birds, but some wild birds have also been infected.

Low pathogenic avian flu viruses occur naturally in wild birds but when they mix with domestic poultry, they have the potential to transform into the highly deadly form, H5N1, that is capable of killing chickens, wild birds and potentially infecting people.

There is concern that wild birds may spread the virus into North America as they migrate. Birds may overwinter with infected birds and then fly back to North America carrying the virus, potentially spreading the disease. There is also a concern that it may spread to North America through people who have been infected, are traveling with contaminated articles or are smuggling birds or poultry products.

Federal and state agencies are running continent-wide surveillance for the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus. In the US, more than 50,000 wild birds and 25,000 fecal samples will be tested.

The NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife is working in cooperation with the US Department of Agriculture - Wildlife Services to monitor the wild birds in the state. Emphasis in wild bird populations will be on migratory birds, especially those that may mix with birds from Asia and Europe and that may have a higher chance of carrying the H5N1 virus.

Wild birds will be trapped alive and will have samples taken or hunter-harvested birds will be sampled.

1,873 wild birds were collected and were sampled in New Jersey from the summer of 2006 through March of 2007. Captive pheasants at the state pheasant farm comprised 217 of the birds tested.

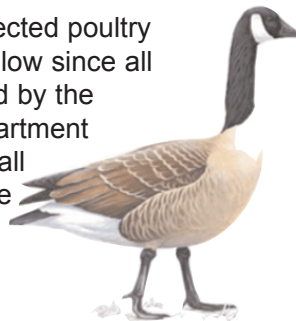
From summer 2007 through spring 2008, 1,500 birds will be sampled for the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus in New Jersey.

Sampling will increase during the fall and winter as birds are migrating. Mortality events will also be investigated and over 800 fecal samples will be collected and tested.

The United States Department of Agriculture has banned the import of birds or poultry products from any country where the H5N1 virus has been reported.

For the past 20 years, the NJ Department of Agriculture, Division of Animal Health has been actively surveying birds for Avian Influenza. Surveyed birds include domestic backyard flocks, birds at livestock and poultry auctions, bird markets and poultry factories.

Chances of infected poultry entering a store is low since all poultry is inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture and all the farms where the birds are raised are checked for diseases.



## Information for Hunters

Although the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus is mainly a poultry disease, wild birds appear to play some role in its spread. Risk to hunters appears low, but caution is warranted.

Water has not been known to transmit any flu virus, but if there were a large number of infected birds in an area with little water flow, high levels of contamination may infect a person if the water is left untreated. Make sure to filter all water since other problems may develop if untreated water is drunk. Water filters designed for camping are biological filters, designed to remove bacteria and protozoa from the water. These filters should be used in combination with a disinfectant or by boiling water for at least one minute to remove viral contaminants. Freezing will do nothing to the virus; it can still be dangerous when thawed.

If you hunt with a dog, there is no evidence that they can contract the virus.

### Precautions for Handling Birds

- Use rubber gloves when you clean birds or gather eggs.
- Keep your hands away from your face and mouth when handling birds or eggs.
- Cook any birds or eggs, whether they are store bought or wild, all the way through. The juices should be clear and there should be no pink meat. Use a meat thermometer to ensure that the meat has reached a minimum temperature of 165° F.
- Cook birds at a minimum oven temperature of 325° F.
- Eat smoked birds only if they have been heated to 165° F.
- Wash your knife, work area and hands with soap and water after handling birds.
- Disinfect your work area and knives with a 10% bleach solution.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke while handling birds - wait until after you have washed your hands.
- If you use feathers in crafts and clothing, make sure they are collected from healthy birds. Feathers can be cleaned using 1 tablespoon of bleach to a quart of water.
- Observe wildlife from a distance.
- Avoid touching wildlife, including diseased or dead animals.
- Regular flu shots are not thought to protect you from the virus. They may help prevent the virus from combining with other strains. This in turn would help prevent the spread of the virus among people.

