

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM BIRD FLU



Public Health
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Champaign-Urbana Public Health District
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H5N1—commonly known as H5 bird flu, bird flu, avian influenza, or highly pathogenic avian influenza—has been affecting domestic and wild bird populations worldwide. More recently, it has caused outbreaks among poultry and dairy cows in the U.S.

Human infections with avian influenza viruses are rare but can occur if enough virus enters a person's eyes, nose, or mouth, or is inhaled. This may happen when the virus is airborne (in droplets or possibly dust) and inhaled, or when a person touches a contaminated surface and then touches their mouth, eyes, or nose.

According to the CDC, the risk of H5 bird flu to the general public remains low. People rarely get bird flu, but those who interact with infected dairy cows, poultry, or wildlife have a greater risk of infection. Follow these guidelines to stay healthy.

PROTECT YOURSELF AS A BACKYARD BIRD FLOCK OWNER

Warning signs of infectious disease in birds include:

- Fatigue or lethargy
- An abnormal drop in egg production
- Swelling or discoloration of the eyelids, comb, wattles, or shanks
- Stumbling, falling, or other coordination issues
- Diarrhea
- Unexplained death

How to protect yourself and your flock

To protect against disease, isolate your flock by keeping your birds contained and separate from visitors or other birds. Avoid exposure to potential sources of infection by not handling sick or dead birds, their droppings, or contaminated items such as ponds, water buckets, or feeding pans without [proper personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#), which shields you from harmful germs and viruses.

If H5 bird flu is confirmed, continue wearing PPE in contaminated areas, including coops, runs, or barns. During cleanup, minimize airborne particles by avoiding activities that stir up dust, bird droppings, or feathers, as this reduces the risk of inhaling the virus.

What about bird feeders?

- Birds that gather at feeders are generally not carriers of H5N1.
- The USDA does not recommend removing backyard bird feeders solely for H5N1 prevention unless you also care for poultry.
- To minimize contact between wild birds and poultry, remove sources of food, water, and shelter that might attract wild birds to your property.

PROTECT YOURSELF AS A HUNTER

- Hunters handling wild birds should field dress and prepare game in an outdoor or well-ventilated area.
- Do not handle or eat sick game.
- Avoid smoking, using smokeless tobacco, eating, or drinking while handling animals.
- Wear rubber or disposable gloves when handling and cleaning game. If possible, also wear an N95 respirator or a well-fitting face mask (e.g., a surgical mask) and eye protection while dressing birds.
- After handling game, dispose of gloves and face masks, wash your hands thoroughly with soap or disinfectant, and clean all knives, equipment, and surfaces that came into contact with the game.
- Cook all game thoroughly to an internal temperature of 165°F before consuming.

WAYS TO HELP PREVENT H5 BIRD FLU SPREAD

- Report sick or dead domestic/owner poultry to the Illinois Department of Agriculture at 217-782-4944 or USDA APHIS Veterinary Services at 1-866-536-7593.
- Do not send dying or dead wild birds to veterinarians or wildlife refuges for testing. Instead, notify the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) online at dnr.illinois.gov/feedback/html or USDA Wildlife Services at 1-866-487-3297 if you find five or more deceased wild birds in one location.
- To reduce the risk of infection to other animals, keep dogs and other pets away from the carcasses of birds that may have died from HPAI.
- If wild bird carcasses need to be disposed of, IDNR recommends following the guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health (see the guidance below for instructions on disposing of dead birds).

HOW DO I DISPOSE OF DEAD BIRDS ON MY PROPERTY? (FIVE OR MORE BIRDS)

What supplies are needed?

- Disposable waterproof gloves
- Plastic bags
- Safety goggles
- N95 mask
- Secure trash can

1. Do not use bare hands to pick up any dead bird or animal.
2. Use disposable waterproof gloves or an inverted plastic bag to pick up dead bird(s). Place the bird(s) in a plastic bag, double-bag it, and dispose of it in the trash where it cannot be accessed by children or animals.
3. Consider wearing a raincoat or disposable plastic trash bag over your clothes.
4. Safety goggles and an N95 mask (available in retail stores) can be used to protect your eyes, nose, and mouth.
5. After handling a bird, avoid touching your face with gloved or unwashed hands.
6. After the bird(s) are disposed of, take gloves off first and put them into a plastic bag for disposal.
7. Wash hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.
8. Remove mask and goggles.
9. Throw away any disposable equipment after use (mask, gloves) and disinfect other equipment (like safety goggles) according to the manufacturer's specifications.
10. Wash clothes in the washing machine with detergent and use the hot water cycle.

PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM SEASONAL FLU AND H5N1 RISKS

Getting a seasonal flu vaccine won't protect against H5N1 bird flu, but it's essential for everyone—especially those frequently exposed to birds or other animals. Ideally, get vaccinated at least two weeks before potential exposure. This reduces the risk and severity of seasonal flu and lowers the rare chance of co-infection with bird and human flu viruses.

If you develop flu-like symptoms within 10 days of contact with animals that might be infected—such as cattle, poultry, or wild birds—stay away from others as much as possible and inform your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider and local health department will guide you on next steps and may recommend testing for H5N1 bird flu.

FOR MORE TIPS AND INFORMATION

<https://bit.ly/m/CUPHD>



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