

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SEE DEAD WILD BIRDS?

Call the WI Dead Bird Hotline (1-800-433-1610) to report wild birds dead from unknown causes.

## HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?

There is no evidence of (HP) H5N1 in birds or people in the United States. However, even apparently healthy wild birds can be infected with disease agents that can move between wildlife and humans. Here are several specific precautions you can take:

- Do not feed waterfowl.
- Avoid sick and dead birds.
- Avoid bird feces, feathers, and touching pond water where there are large concentrations of waterbirds.
- Wash hands thoroughly before eating, drinking, or smoking.
- Wash hands, clothes, and shoes soiled with bird feces.



<http://www.dnr.wi.gov>

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## INFORMATION FOR WATERFOWL HUNTERS

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and other cooperating partners do not believe that hunters should be overly concerned about avian influenza when they take to the field in the fall. However, it is always a wise and safe practice to take some common sense precautions while hunting.

- Do not pick up sick or found dead wild animals without gloves.
- Keep harvested birds cool and dry after harvest.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while cleaning birds.
- Consider wearing disposable or rubber gloves when cleaning game and wash your hands after any contact.
- Clean all tools and surfaces used to clean the bird immediately afterward, using hot soapy water.
- Cook game meat thoroughly; temperatures of 155-165°F will kill most disease organisms, including avian influenza viruses.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services, and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

This publication can be made available in alternate format upon request. Please call (608) 264-6036 for information.

# Avian Influenza in Wild Birds



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## WHAT IS AVIAN INFLUENZA?

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Avian influenza (AI), or bird flu, is a group of viruses that affect wild and domestic birds. The viruses are only found in a small number of birds in the wild and rarely cause disease.

Since 2003, a dangerous form of AI has emerged in Southeast Asia, and now has been detected throughout Asia, parts of Europe, and Northern Africa. This highly pathogenic (HP) H5N1 virus has resulted in millions of domestic poultry deaths, most euthanized to prevent the spread of the virus. The high mortality rate in the small number of human cases associated with this (HP) H5N1 outbreak has raised health officials' concern.



Photo by Ryan Brady, pbase.com/rbrady

(HP) H5N1 has been detected and associated with deaths in wild birds in Asia and Europe. **To date, (HP) H5N1 has not been detected in wild birds, domestic poultry, or humans in North America.**

## HOW IS AVIAN INFLUENZA TRANSMITTED?

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Some wild birds carry AI viruses in their intestines, but usually do not get sick from them. Infected birds shed AI viruses in fecal droppings, saliva, and nasal discharges. Occasionally AI viruses are transmitted between wild birds and poultry, probably by direct mixing or sharing of food and water sources. Worldwide, there is only one case documented where H5N1 is thought to have been transmitted directly from wild birds to humans. There are almost 300 cases (worldwide) where poultry to human transmission of the virus is suspected.

## HOW COULD (HP) H5N1 ENTER THE UNITED STATES?

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Bird migration from Asia or Europe is only one possible route of introduction of (HP) H5N1 into the United States. Illegal smuggling of birds and poultry products and travel by infected people or people traveling with virus-contaminated articles are possible means of introducing the new strain of (HP) H5N1 virus into the U.S.

The most effective way to prevent transmission of (HP) H5N1 is to improve bio-security around poultry farms, thereby preventing contact with wild birds. Wisconsin has emergency response plans in place if (HP) H5N1 or other highly pathogenic avian influenzas cause disease in the state's wildlife, poultry, or public.

## HOW IS THE WDNR MONITORING FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA IN WILD BIRDS?

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The WDNR has had a surveillance program in place to investigate wild bird deaths for decades. In 2006, Wisconsin screened over 2,000 samples from live and dead birds for evidence of H5N1; no evidence was found. This screening was part of a nationwide effort where almost 145,000 samples were tested, with no evidence of (HP) H5N1 found. Working in partnership with the USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services, in 2007 WDNR will continue to screen for AI in samples from groups of dead birds reported by the public and from waterfowl harvested in the fall by hunters.

For more information on the WDNR surveillance efforts, please visit: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/whealth/issues/AI/background.htm>



Photo by Ryan Brady, pbase.com/rbrady