

## **Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 Information for People Who Handle Sick or Dead Birds**

- Avian influenza H5N1 is primarily found in species of waterfowl and other waterbirds (for example, ducks, geese, gulls, loons, and herons), raptors (for example, hawks and eagles), crows, and shorebirds.
- **While H5N1 continues to widely circulate, assume that any sick or dead birds in the above species are infected with H5N1.**
- After H5N1 is detected in a specific area, testing will not be done for most birds. Dead birds can be reported to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and carefully disposed.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continues to assess that the current H5N1 bird flu risk to the general public remains low; however, people with regular exposure to animals and birds may be at greater risk and should take precautions.
- If you handle a suspicious bird, monitor yourself for 10 days, starting from the last time you handled the bird, for any flu-like signs, conjunctivitis, fever, or respiratory illness.

### **About H5N1 Avian Influenza**

H5N1 is a type of avian influenza that can cause severe disease and death in poultry and many waterbirds. Sick birds can spread the virus in their saliva, nasal fluid, and feces. H5N1 is circulating primarily among wild waterbirds, with occasional spread to farmed and backyard poultry and to mammals. In New York State, H5N1 has been detected in mammals, including red fox, raccoon, skunk, opossum, bobcat, and gray squirrel. There have also been a small number of human cases of H5N1, primarily among people who have close contact with infected animals, but none in New York State. To date, there have been no known cases of person-to-person transmission.

### **How to Protect Yourself When Working with Sick or Dead Birds or Animals**

Staff who handle and transport live birds or other animals to a facility (e.g., rehabilitator or shelter), or collect dead birds and other animals for testing or disposal, should:

- Avoid close, prolonged contact with the animal.
- Minimize direct contact with the animal by wearing gloves. If handling a carcass, consider using a shovel or a garbage bag to pick up the body, if possible.
- Wear respiratory protection, such as a three-ply disposable mask or a KN95 or N95 mask.
- Wear eye protection to prevent direct or indirect (touching your eyes after handling a bird) contamination of your eyes.
- Wear a disposable apron if your clothing may be contaminated while you handle the animal.
- After handling the animal, discard gloves and face masks, then wash your hands with soap and water. If clothing was contaminated, change your clothing before any contact with healthy domestic poultry and birds.
- Clean and disinfect cages used to transport the animal.

### **Disposal of Dead Birds and Other Animals**

- Place carcass(es) in a thick plastic trash bag and tie it closed. Place the bag with the dead bird (inner bag) into another plastic trash bag (second bag) and then a third bag (outer bag).
- Before closing the outer bag, remove the surgical mask, apron, and rubber gloves (inside out), and place them into the outer bag and tie it closed.
- Clean contaminated clothing using hot water in a washing machine.
- Clean contaminated re-usable gloves and boots with Lysol or a bleach solution.
- If you used a shovel, clean it with hot, soapy water and disinfect it with diluted bleach (one-third cup bleach added to a gallon of water).

### Signs and Symptoms of H5N1 in People

If you had contact with a suspicious sick or dead bird, monitor your health for a **10-day** period that starts the day after your last exposure. Check yourself daily for any of the following signs and symptoms:

- Conjunctivitis (eye tearing, redness, or irritation)
- Fever, feeling feverish, or chills
- Headaches
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Diarrhea

If you develop any of signs or symptoms within the 10-day period, contact your health care provider and tell them you were exposed to sick or dead birds and may need to be tested. If you had a concerning exposure, notify your supervisor so they can report it to NCDOH. Concerning exposure may include direct contact with fecal or bodily secretions from a bird with your eyes or mouth or handling suspicious birds without appropriate personal protective equipment.

### Trainings from DEC Wildlife Biologists on PPE, and disinfection

- [Instructional Video: PPE for Wildlife Disease Investigation and Response](#)  
Learn how to work safely when handling wildlife by watching biologist Kevin Hynes demonstrate how to use basic personal protective equipment.
- [Instructional Video: Disinfection Techniques](#)  
This video by DEC Wildlife Biologist Kevin Hynes explains how to properly disinfect equipment after handling wildlife.

**To report sightings of dead wild birds to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, scan QR Code below:**



**For additional information, call the Nassau County Department of Health at 516-227-9697 or scan the QR Code below:**

