



Gloucester County Department of Health
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Date: January 6, 2025
Avian Influenza H5N1

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), H5N1 virus, also known as “bird flu,” has been circulating in wild birds worldwide. It is causing outbreaks in poultry and, more recently, dairy cows in the United States. Bird flu has not been detected in New Jersey dairy cattle as of this date, and there have been detections in NJ poultry however not recently. Bird flu is a zoonotic disease that has also caused sporadic infections in people, there has not been any documented human to human spread of this virus in the United States to date.

Avoid Raw Pet Food

Recent investigations implicate food as a source of infection for cats, most often unpasteurized milk and raw or undercooked meat (e.g., poultry). Other potential sources include:

- Raw colostrum and other unpasteurized dairy products (like cream)
- Exposure to infected wild birds or poultry (Raw Food)

Information for Hunters Who Handle Wild Birds

- Hunters who handle wild birds should dress game birds in the field when possible and practice good hygiene to prevent any potential disease spread.
- If possible, wear gloves, an N95 respirator if available or, if not available, a well-fitting facemask (e.g., a surgical mask), and eye protection when dressing birds.
- Afterwards, throw away the gloves and facemask and then wash your hands with soap and water

https://www.fws.gov/avian-influenza?utm_campaign=&utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

Information for Pet Owners

• Cats

Fever, lethargy, loss of appetite, red eyes, discharge from the eyes and nose, difficulty breathing, and neurological signs like tremors, seizures, incoordination, or blindness

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-health/avian-influenza/avian-influenza-h5n1-cats>

• Dogs

Fever, lethargy, loss of appetite, difficulty breathing, and neurological signs like tremors, seizures

Backyard Chickens

H5N1 in chickens and turkeys resembles any other mild respiratory disease. Birds may die suddenly without any signs of disease. Signs may include:

- Sudden increase in bird deaths
- Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing and nasal discharge (runny nose)
- Watery and/or green diarrhea
- Lack of energy and poor appetite
- Drop in egg production or soft- or thin-shelled misshapen eggs
- Swelling around the eyes, neck and head
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs and legs

All poultry owners, whether commercial producers or backyard enthusiasts, need to report sick or unexplained bird deaths to State/Federal officials immediately. For small flocks, this can include deaths of one bird per day for two days in a row.

Wildlife Information

- People should avoid unprotected (not using respiratory and eye protection) exposures to sick or dead animals, including wild birds, poultry, and other domesticated birds.
- Immediately report sick or unexplained deaths in domestic poultry or suspected cases of H5N1 in livestock, to the NJDA, Division of Animal Health at 609-671-6400 or state.veterinarian@ag.nj.gov.
- Additional information and recommendations for veterinarians and poultry or dairy cattle owners can be found on the NJDA website to Report sick or dead wild birds to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish and Wildlife hotline at 1-877-WARNDEP.

<https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/prevention/index.html>

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/>

To Report a death of a wild bird or poultry:

For more information or to report sick or dead poultry contact:

- New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Division of Animal Health 609-671-6400 or state.veterinarian@ag.nj.gov Report sick poultry or unexplained poultry deaths (online form)
-OR-

USDA APHIS Veterinary Services NJ Area Office

609-259-5260 or toll-free at 1-866-536-7593

Call:

USDA Wildlife Services 908-735-5654

NJDA 609-671-6400

USDA Veterinary Services 609-259-5260

References and Resources:

https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/diseases/avian_influenza.html

https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/novel_flu.shtml

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/>

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-livestock>