

AVIAN INFLUENZA IN CANADA

Update for northern communities

Avian influenza (HPAI) virus has been detected in wild birds in Canada, including migratory birds. With spring migration underway, it is important for northern residents to be aware of this issue and be on alert for birds with signs of HPAI.



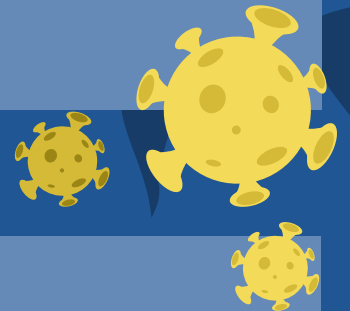
What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza is a viral infection that is highly contagious among birds and is found in domestic poultry and wild birds including ducks, geese, swans, gulls, terns, shorebirds, cranes, and raptors.

Wild birds, especially waterfowl, naturally carry avian influenza viruses. They are not always affected by the disease but can still transmit it to other wild birds and domestic birds. Avian influenza viruses are classified based on their ability to cause disease in domestic poultry. HPAI viruses spread rapidly and cause severe disease in poultry. On rare occasions, avian influenza viruses can cause disease in humans.

Signs that a bird may have HPAI include: nervousness, tremors or lack of coordination, swelling around the head, neck and eyes, lack of energy or movement, coughing, gasping for air or sneezing, diarrhea, or sudden death. It is important to note that not all infected birds appear sick.

Multiple dead birds in one location are a sign that the virus may be present.



What is the risk to humans?

It is safe for people to eat fully cooked waterfowl meat and eggs.

The risk of transmission of avian influenza to humans from cases in wild birds is low.

As a precaution, basic measures are recommended for hunters and other bird handlers to reduce the risk of disease and the spread of the virus: **wear gloves, wash hands with soap and warm water, clean and disinfect equipment, wash or change clothing.**



Cook well!



Wear gloves!



Wash your hands!



Disinfect your gear!



Wash or change clothing.

What should you do if you find dead or sick birds?

If you encounter birds acting strangely or dead birds, you are encouraged to report sightings directly to the Conservation Officer in your community.

Members of the public should not handle wild birds found dead or live birds that are acting strangely. If contact with wild birds found dead is unavoidable, wear gloves or use a doubled plastic bag and avoid contact with the bird's body fluids and feces. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.



Report what you see to your local Wildlife Office!



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What precautions should you take when hunting or harvesting eggs?

It is safe to hunt and harvest eggs, however it is important to follow the recommendations below.

Exposure to avian influenza can occur when handling wild birds or eggs. (HPAI virus can be found on the shell and potentially in the whites and yolk of eggs laid by infected birds. Not all infected birds may appear sick.)

To protect your health but also to prevent the spread of the virus, it is recommended you:

- ✔ Do not handle or eat sick birds or birds that have died from unknown causes.
- ✔ Wear gloves (vinyl, latex, nitrile, rubber) when preparing harvested birds or handling eggs and work outdoors when possible.
- ✔ Avoid touching your face and do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling birds or eggs.
- ✔ Separate clean and dirty eggs during collection and avoid collecting cracked and very dirty eggs.
- ✔ Dry clean the eggs, rubbing dirt and debris off with a clean and dry paper towel, cloth, or brush. Washing or soaking eggs with water can affect the eggshell and allow germs to enter the egg.
- ✔ Always wash your hands immediately after you have finished handling/cleaning harvested birds or eggs. Use hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) when you can't use soap and warm water.
- ✔ Always thoroughly wash and disinfect all equipment and surfaces used with soapy water first and then using a household disinfectant or a bleach solution (25ml bleach to 2L water = 5 tsp bleach to 8 cups water).
- ✔ Immediately remove and wash and/or change clothing and footwear that may be contaminated with blood, feces or respiratory secretions. Also brush off organic material from boots and clothing, change gloves and use hand sanitizer when moving between separate colonies to avoid spreading the virus.



How do you cook or prepare wild bird meat/harvested eggs?

It is safe to consume **fully-cooked** game birds or eggs.

To reduce your risk of exposure to avian influenza and other pathogens, it is important to follow these recommendations:

1. Fully cook game meat / eggs. **Freezing does not kill the virus!**
 - ✔ Avoid consuming eggs raw or partially cooked (runny yolk).
 - ✔ Avoid using raw eggs in foods that will not be cooked or baked.
 - ✔ Ensure meat is fully cooked with no pink meat and juices run clear.
2. Follow general safe food handling practices
 - ✔ Keep raw meat separate from other food products to avoid cross-contamination.
 - ✔ Wash your hands before and after handling raw meat or eggs.
 - ✔ Thoroughly clean and disinfect your prep area including tools and work surfaces.



If you become ill after handling a bird or wild bird eggs, contact your local health centre as soon as possible and inform them that you have been in contact with wild birds.



Stay informed:

To find out if an outbreak of avian influenza has occurred in your area you can:

1. Get up-to-date information at your local Conservation Office or call your regional environment health office:
Baffin 867-975-1163 | Kitikmeot (867) 983-4236 | Kivalliq (867) 645-8071
2. Check avian influenza biweekly reports prepared by the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative. Available at: http://www.cwhc-rcsf.ca/avian_influenza_biweekly_reports.php
3. Consult the online Canadian public interface that shows locations of HPAI infections in wild birds in Canada (regularly updated). Available at: <https://cfia-ncr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/89c779e98cdf492c899df23e1c38fdbc>



Meat pieces/eggs
74°C (165°F)

Whole Bird
82°C (180°F)