



## AVIAN INFLUENZA (H5N1)

Also known as bird flu, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (H5N1) is a viral infectious disease of birds caused by type A influenza viruses. The virus spreads through direct bird-to-bird contact or indirectly when virus is on clothing, shoes, vehicles, rodents, insects, feed, water, feathers, etc. Birds shed the virus in bodily fluids such as respiratory droplets, mucus, saliva, and feces.

### CURRENT OUTBREAKS

Avian influenza viruses are frequently found in wild birds, such as ducks. The current strain of H5N1 that is circulating in the U.S. and worldwide is causing outbreaks in poultry and U.S. dairy cows. This is the first time these bird flu viruses have been found in cattle.

### CAN AVIAN INFLUENZA AFFECT HUMANS?

H5N1 may infect humans in rare cases when the virus gets into a person's eyes, nose or mouth, or is inhaled. Humans have gotten sick with bird flu after close or lengthy unprotected contact (i.e., not wearing gloves or respiratory protection or eye protection) with infected birds or in places that sick birds or their saliva, mucous and feces have touched. It is rare for humans to be infected with bird flu viruses from another animal such as a cat or a cow.

During the current outbreak, there have been a small number of humans in the US infected with H5N1 after contact with affected poultry or dairy cows. People have reported mild symptoms, with eye redness or irritation often as the only symptom.

### CAN AVIAN INFLUENZA AFFECT PETS?

There is some risk of the virus being spread to mammals such as dogs, cats, and wild mammals, especially if they eat infected, uncooked birds, undercooked poultry or raw infected milk or milk products. Public health does not recommend feeding your pet raw animal products because of the risk of disease spread.

### WHAT IS THE RISK OF TRANSMISSION IN LA COUNTY?

Currently, the risk of transmission of avian influenza to humans is considered low.

There are currently no known cases of H5N1 in California cows based on the limited testing being done by veterinarians.



# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## **AVIAN INFLUENZA (H5N1)**



### **WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH DOING?**

Public Health routinely tracks bird flu by testing sick and dead birds and wild mammals that are collected by animal control agencies across LA County. Public Health is monitoring influenza cases and concentrations of influenza in wastewater. Public health is also testing sick people.

### **WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE THE SPREAD AND RISK OF AVIAN INFLUENZA?**

- Do not eat raw milk, raw cheese and undercooked meat products.
- Avoid unprotected contact with sick or dead animals. The virus can spread to other birds, pets or mammals if they come in contact with infected feces or eat infected animals.
- Report sick or dead birds to local animal control agency for potential collection and testing. Sick birds or animals may not have flu-like symptoms, but may appear generally sick, have difficulty moving, seizures, or be found dead.
- Anytime you are in contact with animals, wash your hands with soap and water before touching your face or eyes.
- Prevent wild birds from getting into areas that house pet birds or poultry. Also make sure wild birds can not defecate down into areas holding pet birds or poultry.
- Take down bird feeders and shared bird baths to reduce the risk of the virus spreading from bird-to-bird.
- Keep pets away from sick and dead birds as there is some risk of the virus spreading to dogs, cats and other wild mammals if they eat raw or uncooked poultry. Do not feed raw milk or raw milk products to pets.
- Get a seasonal flu vaccine. Seasonal flu vaccination will not prevent infection with avian influenza viruses but can reduce the risk of getting sick with human and bird flu viruses at the same time.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**Los Angeles County Department of Public Health - Avian Influenza in Humans**  
[ph.lacounty.gov/acd/diseases/h5n1.htm](http://ph.lacounty.gov/acd/diseases/h5n1.htm)

**Los Angeles County Department of Public Health - Avian Influenza in Animals**  
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/HPAI.htm>

For questions or to find a nearby clinic or doctor, call the Public Health InfoLine at 833-540-0473. Open every day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.  
[ph.lacounty.gov](http://ph.lacounty.gov)



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**  
**Public Health**