



H5 BIRD FLU

Also known as Avian Influenza (H5N1), **H5 bird flu** 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 circulating strain of H5 bird flu virus is causing outbreaks in poultry worldwide and in dairy cows in the U.S. This is the first time H5 bird flu has been documented to infect cattle. In August 2024, H5 bird flu was detected in dairy cows in California for the first time. Since then, H5 Bird Flu has been detected nationwide in domestic cats and other mammals.

CAN H5 BIRD FLU AFFECT HUMANS?

Although it is rare, people can get sick with bird flu. Most people who have been infected got sick after close or lengthy unprotected contact (i.e., not wearing gloves or respiratory protection or eye protection) with infected animals or in places that sick animals or their saliva, milk, mucous, and feces have touched.

During the current outbreak, there have been a small number of humans in the US infected with H5 bird flu. Most people report direct contact with affected poultry or dairy cows before feeling sick. Most people have reported mild symptoms, with eye redness or irritation often as the only symptom.

WHAT IS MY RISK?

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

Those at greatest risk include individuals working with or living near infected animals.

CAN AVIAN INFLUENZA AFFECT PETS?

Yes, pets, including cats, have been infected with H5 Bird Flu, usually after eating infected raw meat or raw milk. Public health does not recommend feeding your pet raw animal products because of the risk of disease spread.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

H5 BIRD FLU



WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH DOING?

Public Health routinely tracks H5 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 H5 BIRD FLU?

- If you own backyard chickens, take steps to protect your flock and yourself. Find out more here: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock>
- 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.
- Anytime you are in contact with animals, wash your hands with soap and water before touching your face or eyes.
- 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.
- Do not eat raw milk, raw cheese, and undercooked meat products.
- 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. 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 - H5 Bird Flu in Humans
ph.lacounty.gov/acd/diseases/h5n1.htm

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health - H5 Bird Flu 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

