

Avian Influenza information bulletin for the Nisqually Tribal Community.

On May 3rd, 2022, staff with the Nisqually DNR found a dead adult bald eagle along the Nisqually River. Because of the growing concern regarding avian influenza in wild birds and poultry, the Nisqually Wildlife Program immediately submitted the eagle to the USGS National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, WI to determine whether avian influenza was the cause of death. On May 10th, 2022 the National Wildlife Health Center confirmed that the eagle was infected with highly pathogenic H5N1, avian influenza. Recently in Washington there have been several cases of avian influenza reported in poultry and wild birds. The Nisqually Wildlife Program is working with state and federal agency partners to better understand the outbreak and how this disease may affect the community.

If you or anyone you know has a backyard poultry flock, avian influenza is harmful and can be harmful to these birds, especially if it's highly pathogenic (HPAI). Always report any signs of disease to the Nisqually Wildlife Program or to your veterinarian.

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza, or bird flu, is a contagious viral infection commonly found in birds. The virus can affect several species of poultry, as well as wild birds and pet birds. Avian influenza virus has caused illness in people, but only one bird-to-human case has ever been reported in the United States. Avian influenza (AI) is a disease that affects wild birds and domestic poultry including:

- Chickens
- Turkeys
- Pheasants
- Quail
- Ducks
- Geese

Wild waterfowl and shorebirds are natural hosts for the avian influenza virus. These birds will shed the virus, often without showing signs of illness.

Is it a problem in Washington State?

Avian influenza is described as low-pathogenic avian influenza, or LPAI, and high-pathogenic avian influenza, or HPAI. The low-pathogenic strain occurs naturally in wild birds and can spread to domestic birds. In this form, the disease is typically not fatal, however it can cause respiratory problems in some birds. Low-pathogenic avian influenza has been found in wild birds in Washington for many years. High-pathogenic avian influenza is fatal in poultry and spreads quickly. The first outbreak of high-pathogenic avian influenza occurred in Washington in 2014.

We expect the disease will remain an on-going risk for poultry in our state. Even low-pathogenic strains of the virus have the potential to mutate into high-pathogenic strains in domestic ducks, chickens, and other types of poultry.

How do birds get avian influenza?

Infected birds can spread avian influenza through their saliva, nasal secretions and feces. If non-infected birds come in contact with infected birds, they can easily become infected. Birds can also become infected from contaminated equipment or materials. In Washington, wild birds may be one way the virus is transmitted.

Can avian influenza be transmitted to people?

According to the CDC, it is rare for people to get infected with bird flu viruses, but it can happen. Bird flu viruses can infect people when enough virus gets into a person's eyes, nose, or mouth, or is inhaled. This might happen when virus is in the air (in droplets or possibly dust) and a person breathes it in, or when a person touches something that has virus on it and then touches their mouth, eyes or nose. Most bird flu infections in people have happened after close, prolonged, unprotected contact with infected birds or contaminated surfaces. People who are sick with bird flu virus infection can be treated with the same prescription drugs that are used to treat people who are sick from human seasonal flu virus infection. People who have had no contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces are thought to be at very low risk of infection. People with close, prolonged, unprotected exposure with infected birds or contaminated environments are thought to be at greater (though probably still low) risk of infection. No human bird flu infections have been reported from proper handling of poultry meat or from eating properly cooked poultry or poultry products.

If I have backyard poultry, what are the symptoms of avian influenza in birds?

- Discharge from the eyes or nasal openings
- Ruffled feathers
- Decrease in appetite or drinking
- Decreased egg production
- Swollen comb or wattle
- Bluish comb, wattle, or legs
- Blood-tinged nasal or eye discharge
- Tilting head
- Lack of coordination
- Sudden death
- Flock owners might also see a high death rate in their flock.

Other poultry species, including turkeys, may have nervous symptoms such as:

- Tremors
- Paralyzed wings
- Laying down and pedaling

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is rapidly fatal for poultry. Sudden onset of HPAI and high death rates are common among all poultry (except ducks and geese). In chickens, HPAI signs often include respiratory (gasping) and digestive (extreme diarrhea) signs followed by rapid death. Chickens may have swelling around the head, neck, and eyes. The heads and legs may also have purple discoloration.

If I have backyard poultry, how can I help prevent avian influenza in my birds?

The best way to prevent birds from becoming infected is to keep the virus from reaching your birds in the first place. That means learning the signs of infection and practicing good biosecurity. Here are biosecurity best practices:

Limit contact with your birds

- Do not allow visitors and animals to have access to your birds. Keep your poultry separate from water fowl, especially wild water fowl.
- Avoid attracting wild birds to your residence.
- Cover or enclose any outdoor feeding areas for poultry.
- Promptly clean up any feed spills.
- Avoid visiting any ponds or streams, especially with pets.
- Consider reducing large puddles and standing water that may be a nice resting place for migratory birds.

Keep it clean

- Keep some shoes and clothes to wear only around your birds. Or be sure to wear clean clothes and disinfect your shoes before visiting your birds.
- Scrub shoes with a scrub brush and disinfectant to remove droppings, mud, and debris.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap, water, and disinfectant before entering your bird area.

Don't bring disease home

- If you visit someplace that has birds or where bird owners visit, like a feed store, clean and disinfect your vehicle and anything else that travelled with you.

- When returning from a fair or exhibition, keep the birds that attended separate from the rest of the flock for at least 2 weeks.
- Keep new birds separate from the flock for at least 30 days.
- Don't share equipment, birds, or other items with neighbors or other bird owners.

Who to call

If you experience unexplained illness or death in your flock	WSDA Avian Health Program 1-800-606-3056
For food safety questions	WSDA Food Safety Program 1-360-902-1876
If you are concerned because you or your family member becomes sick	Washington State Department of Health 1-800-525-0127

If you discover sick or dead wild birds within the Nisqually Reservation and community, please contact the Nisqually Tribe Wildlife Program at 360-456-5221 extension 1339. DO NOT handle any dead wild birds that you may find.

Websites with additional information regarding avian influenza:

CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/h5n1-animals.htm>

Washington State Department of Agriculture

<https://agr.wa.gov/departments/animals-livestock-and-pets/avian-health/avian-influenza>

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/diseases/bird-flu>

USDA Avian Influenza

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-home/hpai>