



Avian Influenza FAQ

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza is a virus that is naturally found in waterfowl and some species of shorebirds. It is uncommon in most commercial poultry flocks in the U.S. It is most often identified in poultry raised outdoors or those that intermingle with or are exposed to wild birds or their droppings.

How is avian influenza transmitted?

Avian influenza is most often spread by direct contact between infected birds and healthy birds. It may be spread indirectly through contact with contaminated equipment and biological secretions and/or excretions.

Where is the virus found in birds?

The virus is found in the bird's nares (nostrils), mouth, eyes and droppings.

Where did the virus come from?

The virus most likely came from Asia, where wild ducks and geese have developed a resistance to the avian influenza. Birds in the U.S. have not yet developed this resistance and therefore the virus is fatal for them.

How can the virus be killed?

Avian influenza viruses are generally sensitive to most detergents and disinfectants, and heating and drying will inactivate them. However, avian influenza viruses can persist in soil, feces, and pond water for varying amounts of time, depending on environmental conditions.

What are the steps to control the spread of the virus once it is found?

- 1) Quarantine - restrict movement of poultry and poultry moving equipment into and out of the control area.
- 2) Eradicate- humanely euthanize the affected flock.
- 3) Monitor the region- test wild and domestic birds in a broad area around the quarantine area.
- 4) Disinfect- kill the virus in the affected flock locations.
- 5) Test- confirm the poultry farm is avian influenza virus-free.

Is it safe to eat poultry and eggs?

YES, it is safe to eat poultry and eggs. You CANNOT get avian influenza from eggs and poultry products that have been prepared and cooked properly. Do not rinse poultry products before cooking them. This can spread infectious agents that may be found in the raw product. Wash your hands with warm running water and soap. Wash cutting boards and utensils thoroughly and avoid their contact with other foods until they are cleaned and dry. Cook poultry products to an internal temperature of at least 165°F.

Have there been any human infections with avian influenza in the U.S.?

No, but people should avoid contact with wild birds and observe them only from a distance. Avoid contact with domestic birds that appear ill or have died. Avoid contact with surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from wild or domestic birds.

Why are avian influenza outbreaks a concern?

There could be a significant economic impact if the number of birds decreases drastically, leading to a lower number of available poultry (less meat and eggs). Other countries may also ban the sale of birds exposed to the virus and impose trade restrictions. Avian influenza could at some point be easily transmitted to humans if the virus mutates.

Does the seasonal flu vaccine offer protection against avian influenza?

NO, seasonal flu vaccination will not prevent infection with avian influenza. However, it can reduce the risk of co-infection with human and avian influenza viruses and can help minimize the opportunity for human and avian influenza A viruses from recombining.

What should hunters do if avian influenza is detected in our area?

If avian influenza has been detected in wild birds, hunters should wear gloves and wash hands with soap and water after handling wild birds and disinfect any materials that come into contact with dead birds. If hunters find dead birds, they can help by reporting the find. The first point of contact should be local fish and wildlife authorities. More information about reporting and disinfecting your equipment can be found at: www.usda.gov/birdflu or www.avianflu.gov.