



Guidance for Animal Control Officers (ACOs) on H5N1 Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

Date: January 16, 2025

Public Health Message Type: Alert Advisory Update Information

Intended Audience: All public health partners Healthcare providers Infection preventionists
 Local health departments Schools/childcare centers ACOs
 Animal health professionals Other:

Key Points or Updates:

- (1) This LINC message provides updated guidance for Animal Control Officers (ACOs) on H5N1 Avian Influenza – also known as “bird flu”. **ACOs who may come into contact with infected birds or other animals should follow the precautions detailed below.**
- (2) Bird flu is circulating globally in wild birds. In the United States, it is causing outbreaks in poultry, and more recently in dairy cows. While there are no current detections in New Jersey dairy cattle or poultry, the virus has previously been found in wild birds and domestic poultry in the state.
- (3) Bird flu is a zoonotic disease that has also caused [sporadic infections in people](#)- but no human-to-human transmission has been documented in the United States.
- (4) There have been increased reports of sick and dead wild birds in New Jersey, and several presumptive positive bird flu cases in wild birds. Confirmatory testing is still pending.
- (5) While the general risk to the public remains low, individuals with occupational or recreational exposure to birds or infected animals may face higher risks.

Action Items:

Animal Control Officers

Stay Informed:

- Review [CDC Information for Workers Exposed to H5N1 Bird Flu](#). Employers should also review CDC’s [Interim Guidance for Employers to Reduce Exposure to Avian Influenza A Viruses for People Working with Animals](#).

Reporting:

- Refer reports of sick or dead wild birds to [NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish and Wildlife](#) (NJDEP) hotline at 1-877-WARNDEP.
- Refer reports of sick or dead domestic poultry or livestock, to the [NJ Department of Agriculture \(NJDA\)](#), Division of Animal Health at 609-671-6400 or state.veterinarian@ag.nj.gov.
- Report any observed sick or dead wild birds directly to NJDEP.

Precautions:

- Avoid unprotected contact with potentially infected animals.
- Use **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** when handling birds or animals with suspected/confirmed H5N1 infection, or when coming into contact with contaminated surfaces.

Work with your employer to ensure you have sufficient PPE supplies. CDC recommendations for high risk exposures can be found [here](#) and include:

- Head cover or hair cover
- Safety goggles (optional face shield on top of safety goggles)
- NIOSH Approved particulate respirator (such as N95)
- Waterproof Coveralls
- Disposable gloves with optional outer work gloves
- Boot covers or boots
- Follow [recommended precautions](#) before putting on PPE, while wearing PPE, and during/after removal of PPE.

Post-Exposure Monitoring:

- Notify your local health department if you have had [exposure to H5N1 virus](#) (e.g. contact with a bird or other animal infected with bird flu, or contaminated materials). Monitor yourself for symptoms for 10 days. Symptoms can include:
 - Eye redness and irritation
 - Fever or feeling feverish
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Runny or stuffy nose
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headaches
 - Fatigue
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Seek healthcare and notify your health department if you develop any symptoms consistent of H5N1. Call your healthcare provider in advance and notify them of your potential exposure to H5N1.

Carcass disposal:

- Carcasses should be double- or triple-bagged using heavy-duty garbage bags. Close the bag using a zip-tie and place in a secure trash bin or dumpster inaccessible by pets or wildlife. Wear PPE during disposal activities and avoid direct contact between you and the carcass by using a tool such as a shovel.

Employers of ACOs:

- Review [CDC's Interim Guidance for Employers](#) to Reduce Exposure to Avian Influenza A Viruses for People Working with Animals.
- Ensure ACOs have access to and training on using PPE for handling potentially infected animals or materials.

Contact Information:

- NJDOH Communicable Disease Service: 609-826-4872

References and Resources:

- https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/novel_flu.shtml

- <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/>
- [NJDEP | Fish & Wildlife | Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza](#)
- [Information for Workers Exposed to H5N1 Bird Flu | Bird Flu | CDC](#)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/prevention/worker-protection-ppe.html>
- <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections>