



Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

Last updated: Jan. 20, 2023

- Avian flu is circulating in birds in Colorado. While the risk to humans remains low, people should avoid direct contact with wild birds and observe them only from a distance. Wild birds can be infected with avian flu without appearing sick.
- Avoid direct contact with surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from wild or domestic birds, if possible. Avoid tracking those materials home or to backyard flocks on boots and other items.
- Bird owners should protect their flocks by increasing biosecurity, monitoring their flocks, and reporting any observed illness. Learn more about protecting your birds from avian flu at ag.colorado.gov/hpai.
- Visit <https://ag.colorado.gov/hpai> and <https://cpw.state.co.us/learn/Pages/Avian-Influenza.aspx> for updates. The Colorado Department of Agriculture provides social media resources [here](#).

What if I see a dead or sick bird on public lands?

While the risk to humans remains low, people should avoid direct contact with wild birds and observe them only from a distance. Wild birds can be infected with avian flu without appearing sick.

People should not touch any dead birds they find on public lands and should not walk on ice to retrieve any birds. If you find three or more dead wild birds in a specific area within a two-week period, you may notify your [local CPW office](#). Do not handle any sick, dead, or dying birds.

What if there is a dead bird on my private property?

If a dead bird is on your property and removal is necessary, wear a mask, eye protection (goggles), and gloves to pick up the bird, immediately double bag it, and place the bags in

municipal trash. Discard the gloves and mask, and wash your hands immediately afterward with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

What should I do if I have been exposed to contaminated materials or sick birds?

The risk to humans is low, but people who have potentially been exposed to avian flu should monitor themselves for 10 days following exposure and contact their health care provider if they experience any symptoms of avian flu – especially respiratory symptoms such as shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing. Other symptoms may include:

- Fever (temperature of 100°F [37.8°C] or greater) or feeling feverish.
- Cough.
- Sore throat.
- Runny or stuffy nose.
- Muscle or body aches.
- Headaches.
- Fatigue.

Less common signs and symptoms include diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, or seizures.

If you get sick after being in close contact with sick or potentially infected birds, contact your state or local health department and a health care provider right away. If you and your health care provider suspect you may have been exposed to avian flu, they should alert their state or local public health agency immediately. Testing at the state lab is required to determine if a positive influenza test is caused by avian flu or a regularly circulating strain of flu.

Is there treatment for people who get avian flu?

Antiviral drugs are available for people who get sick with bird flu. Antiviral treatment works best when started as soon as symptoms begin. If you get sick after being in close contact with sick or potentially infected birds, contact your state or local health department and a health care provider right away. They may have you get tested for bird flu and a health care provider may write you a prescription for an antiviral drug to treat your illness. It's important to take the medication as directed.

Is it safe to eat chicken? What about eggs?

Avian influenza does not present a food safety risk; poultry and eggs are safe to eat when handled and cooked properly.

- Proper handling and cooking of all poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165°F is recommended as a general food safety precaution

How can I protect my household cats and dogs from avian flu?

Although the risk is lower than it is to birds and cases are rare, your domestic animals (e.g., cats or dogs) could become infected with avian flu if they go outside and eat or are exposed to sick or dead birds infected with avian flu viruses, or an environment contaminated with feces of infected birds. People should avoid contact between their pets and wild birds or areas contaminated with avian flu virus. If you think your pet has been exposed to avian flu and is showing symptoms of illness, contact your veterinarian and monitor yourself for symptoms.