

Monitoring for Avian Influenza

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is actively collaborating with state and federal agencies to monitor avian influenza and prepare a response if the highly pathogenic H5N1 disease is detected in North America.

The DNR wants you to know:

- Neither the DNR nor the Department of Health will be accepting dead birds from the public for testing.
- The Department of Health did test dead birds for the West Nile Virus, but that was done to track the presence of the virus in mosquitoes. That isn't an issue with the H5N1 bird flu.
- Nationwide wild bird monitoring efforts are currently focused in Alaska, where flyway routes of migratory birds from Asia and North America overlap. It's very unlikely that the disease will first appear in Minnesota's wild birds.
- Avian influenza is found primarily in ducks and shorebirds, not in the birds typically seen in your backyard (cardinals, chickadees, finches).
- The H5N1 bird flu strain is still almost entirely a disease of birds. Right now, this is still a "bird pandemic" – not a human pandemic.
- No one has been infected with avian influenza through contact with wild birds, or other people.
- The DNR is developing plans to monitor ducks and geese and will continue to collaborate with the University of Minnesota and others conducting waterfowl surveillance later this year.
- Future monitoring will be designed to maximize detection probability by focusing on juvenile waterfowl in mid to late summer when they are more likely to contract avian influenza.
- Even apparently healthy wild birds can carry pathogens other than avian influenza, and some of these are currently of more concern to human health in North America. Basic hygiene, primarily hand-washing and use of rubber or latex gloves when handling any wild animals or carcasses is always recommended.
- If you find a dead bird that must be moved, place it in a plastic bag and dispose of it in the garbage. Be sure to wash your hand thoroughly.
- Wild birds can carry the H5N1 bird flu virus but it doesn't necessarily make them sick. If you find a dead bird, it's unlikely that it died from H5N1 bird flu.

We encourage you to stay informed by seeking additional information from the National Wildlife Health Center:

http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/wildlife_health_bulletins/WHB_05_03.jsp

Additional information also can be found from the World Health Organization:

www.who.int/entity/foodsafety/fs_management/No_02_Avianinfluenza_Dec04_en.pdf.