

FACT SHEET



United States
Department
of Agriculture



United States
Department
of the Interior



United States
Department of Health
and Human Services

Contact:

Angela Harless, USDA (202) 720-4623

DOI Press Office (202) 208-6416

OHIO WILD BIRD SAMPLES UNDERGO ADDITIONAL AVIAN INFLUENZA TESTING

WASHINGTON, Oct. 14, 2006 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of the Interior (DOI) today announced a detection of H5 and N1 avian influenza subtypes in samples from healthy wild Northern pintails in Ottawa County, Ohio. Initial tests confirm that these wild bird samples do not contain the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain that has spread through birds in Asia, Europe and Africa. Initial test results indicate the presence of low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) virus, which poses no threat to human health.

The bird samples were collected on Oct. 8 through a partnership between USDA and the Ohio Division of Wildlife as part of an expanded wild bird monitoring program. USDA and DOI are working collaboratively with states to sample wild birds throughout the U.S. for the presence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). As a result of this expanded testing program, USDA and DOI expect to identify additional cases of common strains of avian influenza in birds, which is not cause for concern.

Thirty five samples were collected directly from the healthy wild birds and screened for H5 at the Ohio Dept of Agriculture Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory. Of those samples, two were sent to USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa, for confirmatory testing and one screened by NVSL tested positive for both H5 and N1 subtypes. This does not mean these birds are infected with an H5N1 strain. It is possible that there could be two separate avian influenza viruses, one containing H5 and the other containing N1.

Confirmatory testing underway at NVSL will clarify whether one or more strains of the virus are present, the specific subtype, as well as confirm the pathogenicity. These results are expected within two to three weeks and will be made public when completed. Low pathogenic avian influenza commonly occurs in wild birds. It typically causes only minor sickness or no noticeable symptoms in birds. These strains of the virus include LPAI H5N1, commonly referred to as "North American" H5N1, which is very different from the more severe HPAI H5N1 circulating overseas.

There is no known health risk to hunters or hunting dogs from contact with low pathogenic forms of avian influenza virus. Nevertheless, hunters are always encouraged to use common sense sanitation practices, such as hand washing and thorough cooking, when handling or preparing wildlife of any kind. DOI has issued guidelines for safe handling and preparation of wild game.

#

For more information about USDA's efforts and research related to avian influenza, go to <http://www.usda.gov/birdflu>. For more information about Interior's efforts and hunter education program, go to <http://www.doi.gov/issues/avianflu.html> For information about the federal government's overall efforts related to avian influenza and human pandemic preparedness, go to <http://www.avianflu.gov>.