



What You Should Know About Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

As of November 2005 the H5N1 strain of Avian Influenza has not been detected in North America.
--- *There is No Current Pandemic Influenza Outbreak* ---

What is Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, and H5N1?

- H5N1 refers to the antigens (a substance that initiates the production of an antibody - the blood proteins that fight infection and contribute to immunity) that identify it as being different from other avian influenza viruses.
- Influenza viruses are constantly changing. Some forms can jump from birds to mammals and on to humans.
- The strain causing concern is highly pathogenic and the disease it causes is currently called HPAI.

Should one be concerned about contracting avian influenza?

- Avian influenza exists naturally within populations of wild birds and has been called “fowl pest” and “fowl plague” for the particularly decimating impacts that occur when these naturally occurring strains become virulent. There are many strains of avian influenza that occur in wild and domestic bird populations and in many of these do not cause illness for the birds they inhabit. Avian influenza is frequent within waterfowl and shorebirds, and to a lesser extent – gulls.
- Few bird viruses are able to infect humans.
- HPAI is primarily an animal disease and unless people come into direct, sustained contact with infected birds, it is unlikely they will contract the disease. The H5N1 virus has demonstrated the ability to infect and produce a fatal illness in humans living under those circumstances. If the virus evolves the capacity for sustained human-to-human transmission, it could spread quickly around the world.

I hunt waterfowl; can I get the disease from wild birds?

- Some birds that migrate to North America do breed in the Arctic Circle in Siberia, but the most numerous of these aren't known to occur in close proximity to where outbreaks in Asian wild birds have been documented.
- Though theoretically possible, there is little evidence that migratory birds in Asia have had a role in the spread of H5N1, nor is it clear what role these birds have on a larger scale.
- It has yet to be determined that HPAI persists within migrating waterfowl or shorebirds or whether birds acquiring HPAI in Asia could present a lingering long-distance threat on that continent.
- Scientists have concerns that HPAI could be transported to North America through illegal traffic in birds.
- One should take common sense precautions at all times when handling wild game of any kind.



Hunter's Precautions

- ✓ Do not handle obviously sick birds or birds found dead.
- ✓ Keep your game birds cool, clean and dry.
- ✓ Do not eat, drink or smoke while cleaning you birds.
- ✓ Wear rubber gloves while cleaning your game.
- ✓ Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol wipes after dressing birds.
- ✓ Clean all tools and surfaces immediately afterward; use hot soapy water, then disinfect with a 10% chlorine bleach solution.
- ✓ Cook game meat thoroughly (155-165°F) to kill disease organisms and parasites.

*The above compliments of
the Alaska Department of Fish & Game*

Other sources of information about HPAI:

United States Fish & Wildlife Service:

www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/issues/AvianFlu/WBAvianFlu.htm

National Centers for Disease Control:

www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm

US Geologic Survey - National Wildlife Health Center:

www.nwhc.usgs.gov

US Department of Health & Human Services

www.hhs.gov/pandemicflu/plano or www.pandemicflu.gov

Nevada State Health Division

<http://health2k.state.nv.us>