



HPAI H5N1 Influenza

“Bird Flu” Facts

No Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Found in Alaska Testing

During the spring, summer and early fall of 2006, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey Alaska Science Center, working with a number of state, federal and Native partners, looked for the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 in almost 17,000 samples from wild birds.

The HPAI H5N1 virus has resulted in the death of millions of poultry and more than 150 people in Europe, Asia, and Africa. (The term “highly pathogenic” refers to the influenza’s ability to cause illness in domestic poultry.)

Among the birds sampled were 4,557 spring subsistence harvested birds; 11,595 birds that were live captured, sampled, and released; 655 birds harvested during the fall hunting season, and 97 birds found dead and examined.



DOI/Tami A. Heilemann

DOI Secretary Dirk Kempthorne and biologist Audrey Taylor free a captured bird after testing.

Sample Scheme	Region	Samples Taken	Low Path AI Positive
Spring Subsistence	YK Delta	2,846	84
	Seward Peninsula	773	12
	St Lawrence Island	938	19
Live Bird	YK Delta	5,465	38
	Alaska Peninsula	1,172	8
	Aleutian Islands	81	0
	Interior	603	21
	NW Alaska	1,156	80
	North Slope	2,576	11
	Seward Peninsula	223	0
	St Lawrence Island	17	0
	SE Alaska	302	1
Fall Harvest	YK Delta	47	2
	Seward Peninsula	53	0
	St Lawrence Island	75	2
	Interior	347	20
	Alaska Peninsula	118	19
	SE Alaska	15	1
Mortality Investigations		97	0
Totals		16,904	318

All of these samples have been tested, and not one has tested positive for the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus. The 2006 sampling program was established to provide an early warning if this virus had been carried into Alaska by migrating birds.

More than 300 of the samples taken this year have tested positive for some form of *low pathogenic* avian influenza, but this is not surprising since there are possibly 144 different subtypes of “bird flu,” most of which do not cause illness in wild birds, poultry, or people.

The bottom line is that the dangerous HPAI H5N1 virus has not yet been detected anywhere in North America.

For more information:
http://alaska.fws.gov/media/avian_influenza/ and
<http://alaska.usgs.gov>

Note: This material was updated on December 5, 2006. See the websites above for new developments and research.