



# HPAI H5N1 Influenza

## “Bird Flu” Facts

**MAY 4, 2007**

### A Few Facts about HPAI H5N1 Influenza in Alaska (“bird flu”)

There have been a lot of stories in the news about HPAI H5N1 influenza, or the bird flu virus.

Here are some facts that many news stories don’t make clear:

■ During 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 term “highly pathogenic” refers to the influenza’s ability to cause illness in domestic poultry.

**All of these samples have been tested, and not one has tested positive for the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus.**

More than 300 of the samples taken 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.**

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.

■ The current HPAI H5N1 strain of bird flu that has been in the news has not been found in any wild or farm-raised birds in America.



*Waterfowl and their habitat.*

USFWS

■ No one has caught this virus from eating a fully cooked bird, either domestic or wild.

■ When wild birds in other countries have caught this flu and died, it is believed that, at least in some cases, they caught it from farmed chickens or other domestic birds

smoke or eat until after you’ve cleaned up.) In remote areas without cleaning supplies, use common sense and avoid touching your mouth or face.

■ If you see dead or sick birds, especially if you notice something unusual, call 1-866-5-BRDFLU (1-866-527-3358). *Do not handle birds found sick or dead!*

### What You Can Do For Safety

The virus is more widespread in other parts of the world today than it has ever been, so now is a time to be careful. Here are a few things you can do.

■ Cook any birds, wild or store-bought, until they’re done all the way through before eating them.

■ Wash your hands and knife with soap and water (or at least use a packaged commercial antiseptic hand cleaner) after handling or cleaning any birds, or wear rubber gloves. (And be sure not to

### For more information:

[http://alaska.fws.gov/media/avian\\_influenza/](http://alaska.fws.gov/media/avian_influenza/)

**Note: This material was updated on May 4, 2007. The avian influenza issue is constantly changing. See the website above to determine if the information in this copy has been updated due to new developments.**

*The Alaska Avian Influenza Information Group includes representatives from the Alaska Departments of Health and Social Services, Fish and Game, and Environmental Conservation; the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*