

# Avian Influenza

## Preparedness and Response

### Food Safety and Avian Influenza Prevention

**Remember: There is currently no influenza pandemic in the world.**

Pandemic influenza is a potential threat to Manitoba and the rest of the world. While there is no influenza pandemic anywhere in the world at this time, Manitobans should take steps to protect themselves and their communities from the possible spread of harmful viruses, such as avian influenza.

#### What is avian influenza (AI)?

Avian influenza, also called AI, avian flu or bird flu, are viruses that infect all species of birds. In rare cases, these viruses can spread from birds to people. Health experts continue to carefully study avian influenza viruses in case they undergo a major change that could cause a human pandemic with significant illness and death among people.

#### How is it spread?

Wild birds can carry flu viruses without getting sick. Wild birds can also infect domestic birds, such as chickens, ducks, geese or turkeys, with avian flu. Domestic birds are particularly at risk for avian influenza infection.

Because they are often raised indoors, domestic birds are in close contact with each other. Infections can spread quickly between birds, through bodily secretions.

#### Is it safe to eat poultry?

Eating properly cooked poultry in Canada is safe. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has import restrictions on poultry and non-processed poultry products from countries affected by avian influenza.

To date, there has been no evidence that the virus is transmitted through contaminated food. Viruses (including flu viruses) are easily killed by heat, so make sure poultry is always thoroughly cooked, with clear juices and no visible pinkness. Make sure whole chickens are cooked to an internal temperature of 82 degrees Celsius (180 degrees Fahrenheit). Chicken pieces should have an internal temperature of 77 degrees Celsius (170 degrees Fahrenheit).

#### Is it safe to eat eggs?

The avian flu virus can be found inside and on the surface of eggs laid by infected birds, though there is no evidence to date of contamination in this way. Pasteurization or proper cooking (until yolk is no longer runny) will kill any harmful viruses inside the egg.

#### What is the safest way to handle food to prevent the spread of bacteria and viruses?

Standard food handling practices can help prevent the spread of viruses and other harmful bacteria:

- Separate raw meat from cooked or ready-to-eat foods to avoid contamination.
- Do not use the same chopping board or utensils for raw meat and other foods.
- Do not handle raw and cooked foods without washing your hands in between.
- Never place cooked meat back on the same surface it was on before cooking.
- Thoroughly wash and disinfect all utensils and cutting surfaces touched by raw meat.

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## Can AI be spread through drinking water?

Only in rare cases can drinking water sources be affected by avian influenza virus deposits. These include surface water bodies such as reservoirs, ponds, lakes and rivers, groundwater aquifers and rainwater collection systems. Open water, where infected waterfowl gather, has the most potential for contamination though the risk is very low. The threat of contamination of most drinking water sources in Manitoba is extremely low.

## How can I protect myself and my family from the flu?

It is important to remember that the risk of avian flu is extremely low; and that the risk of health effects from human influenza is far greater. The best way to protect yourself and others from any flu is to:

- Get a flu shot.
- Cover your cough.
- Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- Stay home if you are sick.

## Does personal hygiene make a difference in containing the virus?

Yes. By using good hygiene practices, we can help stop the human-to-human spread of viruses, including avian influenza. Regularly wash your hands and dry your hands. An alcohol-based disinfectant can also be used to help prevent the spread of viruses.

## What precautions should hunters take in preventing the spread of avian influenza?

- Do not handle birds that look sick or are found dead.
- Wear disposable rubber or latex gloves when handling game.
- Wash hands and equipment thoroughly after handling game.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke while handling live or dead birds.
- Thoroughly cook any bird you intend to eat. Internal temperature of the cooked game should be 82 degrees Celsius (180 degrees Fahrenheit) with no pinkness.
- Dispose of bird remains in a way that prevents scavengers from accessing them.

## What is the government doing to protect Manitobans from avian flu?

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) works with Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) to make sure that poultry, poultry products and birds from affected countries do not enter Canada. Federal and provincial governments are also continuing to work together to educate the public about the risks and prevention of avian influenza. They also have emergency plans in place in the extremely unlikely chance that an avian influenza epidemic should occur.