

Bird Flu – Information for Hunters and Taxidermists

Avian influenza, or bird flu, is a virus that causes disease in chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, and geese. It may also cause disease in other birds as well. The bird flu virus is spread via the bodily fluids and feces of infected birds. Wild birds, especially waterfowl and shorebirds, are natural hosts for the virus. They may not show signs of the disease, even if infected.



The virus is not easily transmitted from birds to people. However, it is possible that the virus could change into another form that spreads rapidly from person to person. Other species which may be able to catch the bird flu virus include pigs, primates, ferrets, rodents, rabbits, cats, and humans. Although it is unlikely that hunters and taxidermists will contract AI, health officials recommend people who handle birds to use common sense precautions.

To reduce the risk of contracting AI or any wildlife disease:

- Limit exposure to feces and bodily fluids from game animals.
- Do not handle or process birds found sick or dead.
- Wear rubber or latex gloves and washable clothing while handling game.
- Dispose of internal organs, feathers, bones, skin, and trimmings in a safe manner by double bagging, sealing both bags, and putting it in the trash.
- Do not eat, drink, or use tobacco products while handling game.
- Wash hands with hot soapy water or alcohol wipes immediately after handling game.
- Clean all tools and work surfaces with hot soapy water then disinfect with 10% chlorine bleach solution or other disinfectant.
- Thoroughly cooked meat is safe to eat. Poultry should reach an internal temperature of at least 165° F. Use a meat thermometer.
- Use caution around water sources and roosting areas where feces from wild birds may accumulate.
- When finished hunting, clean clothing, boots, vehicles, etc. as soon as possible.
- Do not bring game birds onto poultry farms.



Call the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife at (866) 4US-DAWS or the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife at (800) 858-1549 to report sick or dead wild birds. Because waterfowl are the greatest risk, call to report any number of sick or dead waterfowl. For any other type of wild bird, only call to report if there are 5 or more birds.