

Avian Influenza and Your Health Hunters and Hunting FAQs

Avian influenza is a virus that is easily spread from bird to bird. This virus is causing significant illness and death in wild bird populations worldwide, including here in Washington state.

Birds infected with avian influenza spread the virus through their saliva, mucous and feces. **You can become infected if the virus gets into your eyes, nose, or mouth, or if you breathe it in.** Bird flu infections in people are rare and usually happen after a long period of contact with infected birds while not wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (also called PPE).

Avian influenza rarely causes illness in humans, but it is possible. Follow these guidelines to stay healthy:

Before the hunt:

- Pack the supplies you'll need to safely dress game, including:
 - Rubber or disposable gloves
 - An N95 respirator or well-fitting facemask
 - Eye protection (such as safety glasses or goggles)
 - A spray bottle with 10% bleach solution (mix 1 cup of bleach with 1 gallon of water)
 - Soap
 - Water



- Talk to your healthcare provider about getting the seasonal flu vaccine. It is especially important that people who may have exposure to sick birds get a seasonal flu vaccine. The seasonal flu vaccine will not prevent you from getting the bird flu, but it will reduce the chance you'll get sick with human and bird flu viruses at the same time.

While in the field:

- Do not harvest or handle wild birds that are obviously sick or found dead.
- Prevent dogs from having contact with or eating sick or dead wild birds.
- Dress game birds in a well-ventilated area.
- Wear rubber or disposable gloves, an N95 respirator or well-fitting facemask, and eye protection when dressing birds.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while cleaning game.
- When done handling game, immediately wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Clean equipment used for dressing with 10% bleach solution.

Returning home:

- Clean all shoes, equipment and surfaces that have been in contact with birds with soap and water and then disinfect with a 10% bleach solution. Wash all clothes in contact with birds in hot water with detergent and dry on high heat.
- All game should be thoroughly cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Do not feed raw meat or other parts of the carcass to dogs or other animals.
- Check yourself for symptoms of illness for 10 days after the last day of exposure to potentially infected birds or contaminated surfaces or equipment. Contact your local health jurisdiction and health-care provider if you start to feel sick.
- Pets that have contact with wild birds, such as hunting dogs, may be at higher risk of exposure to avian flu. Seek veterinary care immediately if your pet becomes sick.

What are the symptoms of avian influenza in humans?

The reported signs and symptoms of avian influenza infections in humans include:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Eye tearing, redness, irritation
- Sneezing
- Sore throat
- Trouble breathing
- Short of breath
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea (the runs)
- Seizures
- Rash

What should I do if I feel sick and I might have been exposed to avian influenza?

Contact your local health department and let them know about your contact with birds. You can look up the contact information for your

local health department here: doh.wa.gov/about-us/washingtons-public-health-system/washington-state-local-health-jurisdictions or call 206-418-5500 and ask for the contact information for your local health department.

If you need medical treatment, before you arrive in person first call your healthcare provider to let them know about your possible exposure to avian influenza.

Mental Health Resources

Animal health emergencies can cause stress in affected communities. If you notice changes in your emotions or thinking, or if a situation could be life-threatening, get immediate emergency help by dialing **911**. If you have depression, suicidal thoughts, or just need to talk to someone, contact one of these groups:

Washington County Crisis Line

Call your local county crisis line to request assistance (24/7/365) for you, a friend, or family member. www.hca.wa.gov/health-care-services-supports/behavioral-health-recovery/mental-health-crisis-lines

Washington Listens

Washington Listens is a free, anonymous service for anyone in the state, providing support to people who feel sad, anxious, or stressed. **(1-833-681-0211)**

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

24/7, free and confidential crisis resources for you or your loved ones: Dial **988** or **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.

