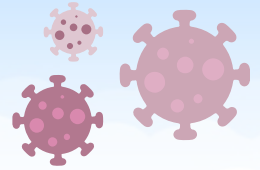


Avian influenza

Content updated in May 2023



! Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has been detected in wild birds in Canada. Northern residents need to know about this and watch for birds with signs of avian influenza.

What is avian influenza?

Birds can easily catch avian influenza from each other. The virus spreads rapidly, so if there are several dead birds in one location, it means the virus may be present. Not all infected birds appear sick.

Signs to look for **in birds**:

- nervousness
- tremors or lack of coordination
- swelling around the head, neck, and eyes
- lack of energy or movement
- coughing, sneezing, or gasping for air
- diarrhea
- sudden death

What is the risk to humans?

It is safe for people to eat fully cooked waterfowl meat and eggs. The risk of people catching avian influenza from wild birds or other wildlife is low. As a precaution hunters should:

- wear gloves
- work in a well-ventilated environment
- wash hands with soap and warm water
- clean and disinfect equipment
- wash or change clothing after handling birds or eggs

What is the risk to other animals?

The risk of other animals catching avian influenza from wild birds is low; however, dogs and wild carnivores (e.g., foxes, mink, bears and seals) can also become ill from eating infected bird carcasses or from exposure to heavily contaminated environments. It is a good practice for hunters and trappers to be careful when handling wild carnivores, and to prevent dogs from contacting sick or dead wildlife.



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What precautions should you take when hunting or harvesting eggs?

It is safe to hunt wild birds and harvest eggs if you follow the recommendations below. There may be avian influenza virus on the shells and in the whites and yolks of eggs laid by infected birds. Infected birds may not look sick. To protect your health and prevent the spread of the virus:



Do not handle or eat birds or other wildlife that look sick or have died from unknown causes.



Where possible, work outdoors, and wear gloves (vinyl, latex, nitrile, rubber) when preparing harvested birds or handling eggs to avoid direct contact with blood, feces and respiratory secretions.



Avoid touching your face and do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling birds or eggs.



Separate clean and dirty eggs during collection. Do not collect eggs that are cracked or very dirty.



Rub dirt and debris off the eggs with a clean and dry paper towel, cloth, or brush. Do not wash or soak eggs with water. Water can allow germs to enter the egg.



Always wash your hands right after handling harvested birds or eggs. Soap and warm water is best. If you cannot use soap and water, use hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol).



Always thoroughly wash and disinfect all equipment and surfaces that touch the eggs or birds. Use soapy water first. Then use a household disinfectant or a bleach solution (25 ml or 5 tsp bleach to 2 L or 8 cups water).



As soon as you are finished, remove and wash and/or change clothing and footwear that may be contaminated with blood, feces, or mucus. When you move between separate bird colonies, brush soil and vegetation off your boots and clothing, change your gloves and use hand sanitizer. This is to avoid spreading the virus.

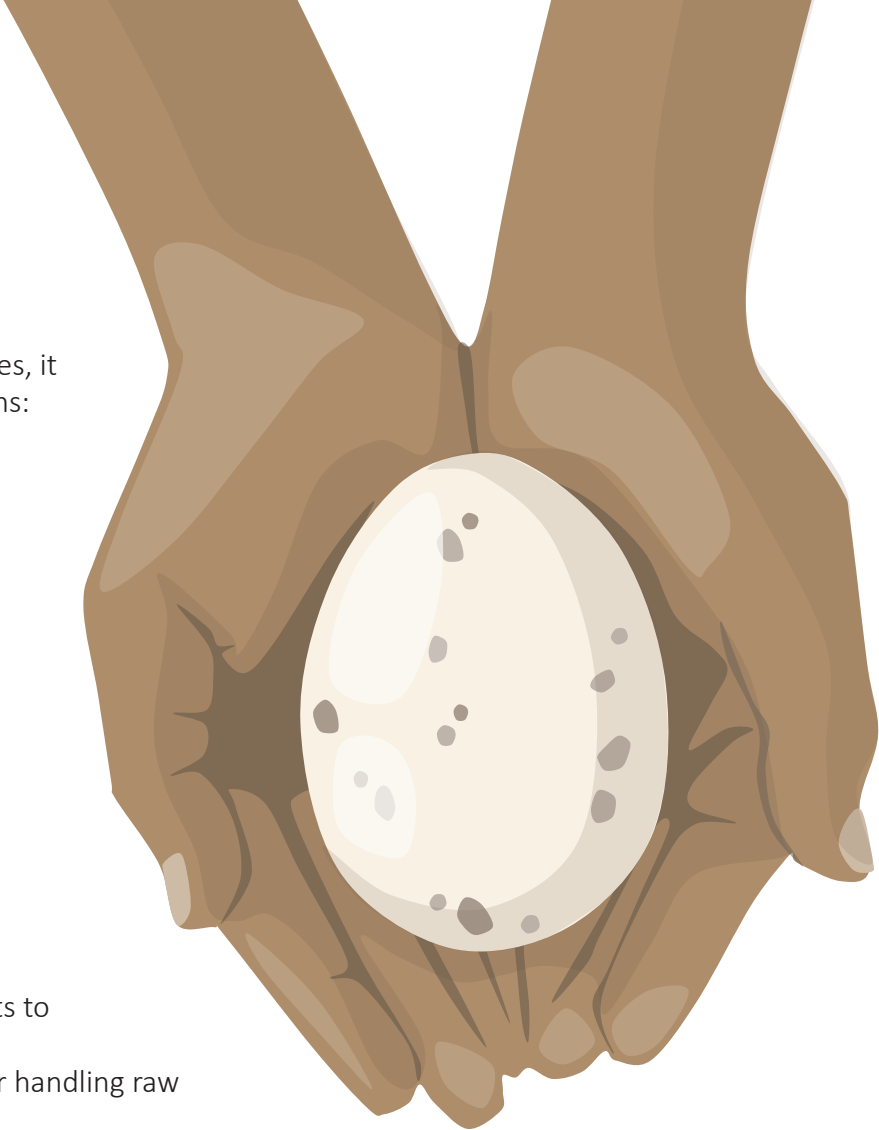
Getting your seasonal flu shot will lower the risk of getting human and avian influenza at the same time, and help prevent the development of new viruses.

! If you become ill with influenza symptoms after handling wild birds, wild bird eggs or other wildlife, contact your local health centre as soon as possible and inform them you have been in contact with wildlife.

How do you cook or prepare wild bird meat or harvested eggs?

It is safe for people to consume **fully cooked** game birds or eggs. To reduce your risk of exposure to avian influenza and other diseases, it is important to follow these recommendations:

- 1** Fully cook game meat and eggs. Freezing does not kill the virus!
 - Avoid eating eggs raw or partially cooked (runny yolk)
 - Avoid using raw eggs in foods that will not be cooked or baked
 - Cook the meat thoroughly. There should be no pink meat and the juices should run clear
- 2** Follow general safe food handling practices
 - Keep raw meat, organs and eggs separate from other food products to avoid cross contamination
 - Wash your hands before and after handling raw meat, organs or eggs
 - Thoroughly clean and disinfect your prep area including tools and work surfaces



COOK WELL!

Meat pieces or eggs → 74°C (165°F)
Whole bird → 82°C (180°F)



What should you do if you find dead or sick birds?

! If you see dead birds or birds acting strangely, tell the Conservation Officer in your community.

Do not handle wild birds found dead or birds that are acting strangely. If you must touch a wild bird that was found dead, wear gloves or use a doubled plastic bag. Avoid contact with the bird's body fluids and feces. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or use hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol).

Avian influenza has also been found in other wildlife. You are always encouraged to report sightings of wildlife acting strangely or dead wildlife to your local Conservation Office.

Stay informed

1. Get up-to-date information at your local Conservation Office and local Public Health authority
2. Visit canada.ca/avian-flu-arctic

