

unusual, and you should call DEM at 789-0281 Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. or, at night or on weekends, DEM's Division of Law Enforcement's 24-hour complaint line at 222-3070.

- **Take down backyard birdfeeders during the spring, summer, and fall.** The birds don't need you to feed them during that time, and you don't need their waste droppings.
- **Waterfowl hunters should follow simple precautions,** such as wearing rubber gloves when handling birds, washing hands and instruments thoroughly when done, and cooking meat thoroughly.

### Backyard Poultry Operations

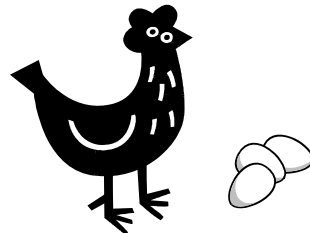
- **If you keep poultry in your yard, practice "backyard biosecurity" to keep it healthy.** Keep visitors away from your birds, particularly those who keep their own poultry. Try to screen in your birds, so they will not have contact with game birds and migratory waterfowl. Keep a pair of shoes and a set of clothes to wear only around your birds in a covered pail at the

entrance to your bird area. Clean and disinfect tires that can harbor germs if you travel to a location where other birds are present, or to the feed store. Don't share birds, lawn and garden equipment, tools or poultry supplies with others. And, report sick birds toll-free to the US. Department of Agriculture at 1-866-536-7593. *(Call DEM at 222-2781 and press zero for a brochure in English or Spanish with more information to help you keep your backyard birds healthy.)*

### **DON'T FORGET:**

**Eggs and poultry, if cooked thoroughly, are safe to eat.**

So, relax and enjoy!



More information can be found on the Health Department website at [www.doh.ri.gov](http://www.doh.ri.gov), and on the agriculture program pages of the DEM website, [www.dem.ri.gov](http://www.dem.ri.gov).

For further information, call DEM's Division of Agriculture at 222-2781, press zero, and ask for the animal health section.

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# What About This "Bird Flu"?

Things  
You  
Can Do  
Now



It's Simply, Common  
Sense

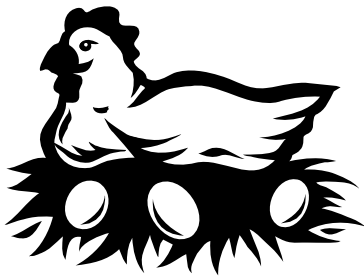


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**M**ost forms of avian influenza, or "bird flu," are not going to make people sick. In fact, some types of avian influenza have been around for many years, affecting only some poultry and wild birds, with no impact on humans.

**Y**ou may remember that Rhode Island saw its last outbreak of avian influenza in 2003 with no effect on public health. The affected chicken flock was euthanized, no other poultry was affected, and Rhode Islanders safely continued to enjoy eating all types of poultry products.

**T**hat sort of avian influenza could happen any time, and should not cause alarm. The Department of Environmental Management monitors the state's poultry farms and would take prompt action, as it did in 2003, if either low pathogenic (less contagious) or high pathogenic (more contagious) avian influenza were found.



## **But what about this bird flu and the possible pandemic everyone is talking about?**

**O**ne particular strain of high pathogenic avian influenza, the H5N1 strain of virus, has spread from several far-Eastern countries to several countries in Africa and Europe. It has shown up in poultry and in some waterfowl such as swans and geese, and, sadly, some people who have had close contact with the sick poultry have become infected and died. To date, no person has caught the H5N1 virus from another person, but world health authorities are concerned that the virus might mutate and become one that can be passed from person to person. If that should happen, there would likely be a bad epidemic — a pandemic — with many deaths.

**T**he H5N1 strain of virus has not yet shown up in North America, but authorities expect that it will sooner or later, either from poultry shipped from overseas, or from waterfowl that fly freely from continent to continent. State and federal government officials have developed plans to deal with such a situation, and are closely monitoring the global impacts.

**I**n Rhode Island, the Department of Health and the Department of Environmental Management have taken many steps to plan for a possible outbreak, and are prepared to advise you through mass media if H5N1 is detected here in Rhode Island.

**M**eanwhile, DEM has some common sense tips on how to deal now with wild birds and live poultry.

### **Wild Birds**

- **Do not feed waterfowl - it's against the law!** Large numbers of waterfowl flock to handouts, resulting in overcrowding and the spread of diseases among the flock. In addition, high levels of their waste can impact water quality, resulting in beach closures and shellfish bans.
- **Do not be concerned if you see a dead bird.** Birds die every day, from many different causes. Leave it alone, or, if you **MUST** remove it, use gloves and a shovel, double bag it, and put it in your regular trash. DEM is not collecting dead birds. (Of course, if you see a large number of dead birds, that would be