

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) has participated in nationwide surveillance of wild birds for HPAI H5N1. RIDEM Division of Fish & Wildlife (DFW) used a variety of methods to sample targeted birds and worked cooperatively with designated laboratories to have those samples tested. The state continues to work with federal agencies and the local media to inform the public of positive detections of HPAI H5N1.

How to Protect Yourself

Asian HPAI H5N1 has been transmitted from wild birds to humans, notably in Asia and Egypt. The CDC considers the risk of transmission of the HPAI strains present in the United States low, but it is possible. Therefore, RIDEM has some basic safety tips:

Do not feed waterfowl – it is against the law! This seemingly harmless activity results in overcrowding, spread of disease, malnutrition, and habitat degradation. In addition, high concentrations of birds can result in degraded water quality.

Feeding wild waterfowl, wild turkey, or wild cervids, black bear, or coyote is not permitted any time in the state of Rhode Island (RI General Laws; Title 20). The violation of any law, rule, or regulation relating to wild animals or wild birds shall be a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars (\$500), or imprisonment for up to ninety (90) days, or both (Rhode Island General Laws; Section 20-1-16).

Do not be concerned if you see a dead bird. Birds die every day, from many different causes. If you **MUST** remove a bird, use gloves and a shovel. Bury or double bag the bird and put it in your regular trash. Always wash your hands after handling wildlife. RIDEM is not collecting dead birds. If you see an unusually large number of dead birds, you should call the DFW or RIDEM Division of Law Enforcement.

Waterfowl hunters should follow the following simple precautions:

- Do not handle or butcher game animals that are obviously sick or found dead
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while cleaning game
- Wear rubber gloves and washable clothing while cleaning game
- Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after handling game
- Wash tools and working surfaces with soap and water, then disinfect with a 10% solution of chlorine bleach.
- Cook game meat thoroughly to reach an internal temperature of 165° F

Waterfowl questions? Contact:

Division of Fish & Wildlife: (401) 789-0281

Wildlife disease concerns? Contact:

RI Department of Health: (401) 222-5960

RIDEM Environmental Police

(401) 222-3070



Avian Influenza in Wild Birds



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

Division of Fish & Wildlife



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Monday—Friday: 8:30am – 4pm

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(401) 222-3070

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Avian influenza (AI), less formally known as bird flu, is endemic in wild bird populations, particularly waterfowl and shorebirds. There are 144 subtypes of AI, named for their protein hemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N). Low pathogenic and non-pathogenic influenza result in low to zero morbidity and minimal mortality. Most often, wild birds are infected with these forms and show little or no sign of illness. Conversely, high pathogenic avian influenza, also known as HPAI, is highly virulent, often resulting in high morbidity and mortality. Avian influenza has been detected in over 100 species of wild birds worldwide.

HPAI H5N1, often referred to as Asian H5N1, is a strain of AI that was established in domestic poultry populations in Asia. The emergence of this strain has caused reason for concern in both domestic and wild bird populations. Avian encounters with HPAI H5N1 have resulted in many deaths among both poultry and wild birds.



How is Avian Influenza Transmitted?

Avian influenza is released naturally through the intestinal tracts of birds. The principal means of transmission of AI among bird species is through

secretions and feces. Furthermore, the virus can remain viable in water, especially at colder temperatures.



The prevalence of avian influenza varies depending on species. In waterfowl, AI is most prevalent in wild birds during late summer and early fall. Infection rates tend to be lower outside of those periods.

How can HPAI H5N1 enter the United States?

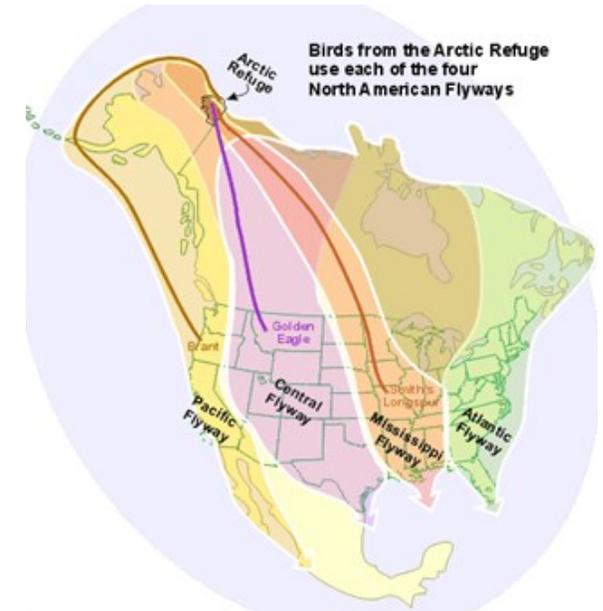
Asian HPAI H5N1 has never been detected in North America, however, a different strain of HPAI was detected in a wild duck in 2015. There are multiple points of possible entry for Asian H5N1 including, but not limited to poultry, illegal poultry and poultry product trade, humans (manure on shoes, *etc.*), and migratory birds.

Wild Bird Migration

Many species of birds exhibit a phenomenon known as migration where they fly long distances between breeding and wintering grounds. In general, there are four major migratory routes or flyways that birds use to travel within North America: Pacific, Central, Mississippi, and Atlantic. Along



these flyways, birds may fly south to their wintering grounds, and return in the spring to their breeding grounds to raise their young.



Movements of some species of migratory birds are intercontinental between North America and South America, Europe, or Asia. It is possible that upon returning to Alaskan breeding grounds after wintering in Asia, an infected individual could pass disease to birds that may migrate throughout continental North America.

Wild bird migration led to the death of over 50 million chickens, turkeys, and other poultry in the affected areas.