

## Frequently Asked Questions

- Q: Can humans catch avian influenza from wild birds?**
- A: There are no known cases where the highly pathogenic (HPAI) H5N1 virus has been passed from wild birds to humans, but direct transmission from wild birds to humans may be possible.
- Q: How could HPAI H5N1 arrive in North America?**
- A: Migratory birds, particularly waterfowl and shorebirds, cross the Bering Sea between Alaska and Asia during their seasonal cycles of breeding, molting, and wintering. The role of wild migratory birds in the spread of HPAI H5N1 between regions remains poorly understood, and it is not clear whether the HPAI H5N1 virus is persistent in wild bird populations or whether wild birds pose a long-distance, long-term risk. If it arrives in North America, the HPAI H5N1 virus is more likely to be transported by people who are infected, or through virus-contaminated articles or illegally imported birds or bird products.
- Q: What is the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources doing about avian influenza?**
- A: The UDWR will be testing the following hunter-harvested waterfowl species during the fall hunts: Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, and Tundra Swan, as part of a surveillance program implemented to provide early detection of HPAI H5N1 should it appear in Utah.

## For More Information:

**National Wildlife Health Center:**

[http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease\\_information/avian\\_influenza/index.jsp](http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/avian_influenza/index.jsp)

**United States Avian Influenza Site:**

<http://www.avianflu.gov/>  
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm>

**For updates on wildlife health in Utah:**

<http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/>

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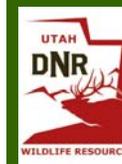
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## UTAH DIVISION OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

# Avian Influenza and Wild Birds



[www.wildlife.utah.gov](http://www.wildlife.utah.gov)

# History of the H5N1 Avian Influenza Virus

Since 2003, the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 virus has spread across Southeast Asia in domestic poultry. Although large numbers of poultry were destroyed to stop the virus, it reached China and Korea by early 2005.

Most human HPAI H5N1 infections resulted from direct handling of infected poultry or contaminated surfaces. Limited person-to-person transmission of the HPAI H5N1 virus has been documented, and there are no known cases of human infection from wild birds. Since February 2006, human cases of HPAI H5N1 have been reported in many countries, and the HPAI H5N1 virus has been reported in poultry and wild birds throughout Asia and Europe.

There are an increasing number of reports that the HPAI H5N1 virus is infecting and causing death in wild birds, particularly some species of migratory waterfowl. These events and the associated spread of the HPAI H5N1 virus to new regions in Asia and Europe have created concerns about the possibility of the HPAI H5N1 virus being carried into North America by migrating waterfowl. HPAI H5N1 has NOT been detected in North America at the present time.

## Avian Influenza Facts

Avian influenza is common in wild bird populations, but usually affects small numbers of birds and typically causes few, if any, symptoms. The virus is spread through nasal and oral discharges, and fecal droppings.



Few bird viruses are able to infect humans, but influenza viruses are able to adapt and change over time. In 1997, a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 virus in Hong Kong was able to spread directly from birds to humans.

HPAI H5N1 is very contagious among certain birds and is deadly to domestic poultry, such as chickens and ducks. Mortality rate in poultry can reach 90-100% often within 48 hours. Occurrence of the HPAI H5N1 virus in wild migratory birds is most frequent in waterfowl and shorebirds.

**If you find a large group of dead waterfowl, contact wildlife authorities. Please do not pick up or handle sick or dead animals!**



## Recommendations for Hunters

While it's highly unlikely that hunters could contract avian influenza from wild birds, following these standard precautions reduces the risk of contracting any wildlife disease:

- Do not harvest any animal that appears sick, and do not pick up diseased or dead wildlife.
- Do not handle or eat sick game.
- Keep your game birds cool, clean, and dry.
- Wear rubber or disposable latex gloves while handling and cleaning birds, wash hands with soap and water, and thoroughly clean all knives, equipment, and surfaces that come in contact with birds. Disinfect using a 10% chlorine bleach solution.
- All game should be cooked thoroughly (well done or 160 degrees F).
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling game.