

Frequently Asked Questions About Avian Flu

This document was developed through the cooperative effort of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MDFW) and other members of the Animal Surveillance and Education Committee*.

Disclaimer: The information in this document is accurate as of 08/13/08. For the most up to date information on avian influenza, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov or the World Health Organization (WHO) website at www.who.int.

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I. Risk of Avian Influenza for People

1. What is avian flu?

Avian influenza (also known as avian flu or bird flu) is a naturally occurring viral infection of birds.

2. What is the difference between low-pathogenicity avian influenza and high-pathogenicity avian influenza?

Some avian influenza viruses cause no or only mild symptoms in birds. These are called low-pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) viruses and are found in birds around the world, including the United States. LPAI viruses generally do not make people sick.

Some avian influenza viruses cause extremely severe symptoms and death in birds, particularly in poultry. These are called high-pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) viruses. Though rare, HPAI viruses can make people sick. One particular type of HPAI, labeled H5N1, has been identified in birds in parts of Asia, Africa, the Pacific, Europe, and the Near East.

A small number of human cases of HPAI H5N1 infection have been reported outside of the United States. Current information on where the HPAI H5N1 virus has been identified throughout the world is available on the [WHO Avian Influenza](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html) website at www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html.

Although the HPAI H5N1 virus has infected a small number of people, it is still considered an avian flu virus and has generally **not** spread person-to-person. Over time, however, flu viruses can change. If the HPAI H5N1 virus did change and was able to easily spread from person to person, it could lead to a flu pandemic in the human population. To date, this has not happened.

3. What is the difference between human flu, avian flu, and pandemic flu?

Human flu or seasonal flu is a viral infection in humans. Human flu passes from person to person through respiratory secretions and tends to occur in seasonal outbreaks. Getting a flu shot annually can help prevent seasonal flu.

Avian flu is a naturally occurring viral infection in birds. Humans who have certain types of exposure to infected birds can sometimes become infected with avian influenza viruses. When this rare event happens, the person may become very ill; however, they would not generally be able to spread the virus to other people.

Pandemic flu occurs when a new strain of the human flu virus appears that is very different from the current human flu viruses. Because most people would not have immunity to this new strain of flu virus, it could spread to many people, across the world, over a short period of time.

4. Can avian flu make me sick?

H5N1 viruses have only been known to infect people who have had a lot of direct contact with the respiratory secretions or droppings of infected birds. There have only been a small number of human cases of H5N1 infection, even though billions of people live in areas where the H5N1 virus has been identified in birds. The spread of the H5N1 virus from person to person is very rare and has only happened when someone has had prolonged, unprotected exposure to the respiratory secretions of a person infected with the virus. Transmission has rarely been observed to continue beyond one person.

5. Has the H5N1 virus been found in the United States?

Ongoing surveillance efforts indicate that the H5N1 virus is not present in Massachusetts or anywhere else in the United States. [See Question 16].

6. How can I protect myself against the H5N1 virus?

Ongoing surveillance efforts indicate that the H5N1 virus is not present in Massachusetts or anywhere else in the United States.

Remember that in areas of the world where human H5N1 infections have been identified, the majority of people infected had a great deal of direct contact with infected poultry or with objects or surfaces contaminated with feces from infected poultry. Examples of direct contact would include touching sick or dead poultry, eating raw or incompletely cooked infected poultry, or touching objects heavily contaminated by infected poultry feces.

To protect yourself from H5N1 viruses in general, avoid unnecessary contact with live poultry or wild birds, especially those birds that appear ill. If you work directly with live poultry or wild birds, more information on protection is available from the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](http://www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib121304.html) website at www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib121304.html.

To protect yourself from all flu viruses (human or avian), it is important to practice good hand hygiene as follows:

- Scrub your palms, between your fingers, under your fingernails and the backs of your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Use regular soap. Antibacterial soaps are not necessary.
- After rinsing, dry your hands with a paper towel. Use the same paper towel to turn off the water and open the restroom door.
- Remember that liquid hand disinfectants are not a substitute for handwashing, though they may be used as a supplement.

For more information, visit the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health \(MDPH\) – Handwashing](http://www.mass.gov/dph/epi) website which can be access from <http://www.mass.gov/dph/epi> and the [MDPH—Influenza](http://www.mass.gov/dph/flu) website at www.mass.gov/dph/flu.

7. Can I be vaccinated against the HPAI H5N1 avian flu?

Research is ongoing and some experimental vaccines have shown promising results, but at this time there is no vaccine available for this particular type of influenza. For more information about the HPAI H5N1 vaccine development process, visit the [National Institutes of Health](http://www3.niaid.nih.gov/news/QA/H5N1QandA.htm) website at <http://www3.niaid.nih.gov/news/QA/H5N1QandA.htm>. For information about the seasonal flu vaccine, visit the [MDPH—Influenza](http://www.mass.gov/dph/flu) website at www.mass.gov/dph/flu.

8. I am feeling sick. Can I be tested for the HPAI H5N1 avian flu?

If you are sick, talk with your health care provider who will decide what type of testing is right for you. At this time, testing for the HPAI H5N1 virus would not be done except in cases where an ill person had traveled to an area heavily affected by HPAI H5N1 virus and had close exposure to HPAI H5N1 infected birds or people. Current information on where the HPAI H5N1 virus has been identified throughout the world is available on the [WHO Avian Influenza](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html) website at www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html.

9. If I am diagnosed with the HPAI H5N1 avian flu, what medical treatments are available?

Currently, two drugs, oseltamivir (commercially known as Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (commercially known as Relenza®) are approved for the treatment of human cases of flu caused by the HPAI H5N1 virus. These drugs are also used to treat cases of seasonal influenza and have been shown to be effective in reducing the severity and duration of illness, especially if administered soon after the onset of illness. You should consult your health care provider about the appropriate treatment for your illness. More information about the use of antiviral drugs in the treatment of HPAI H5N1 avian influenza is available through the [CDC pandemic flu](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/faq/antivirals/1100.html) website at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/faq/antivirals/1100.html>.

10. I am traveling to an area where the HPAI H5N1 virus has been found. How can I protect myself?

CDC has not recommended that the general public avoid travel to any of the countries affected by H5N1 viruses. While visiting an H5N1-affected area, the CDC recommends the following:

- Avoid all direct contact with birds, including domestic poultry (such as chickens and ducks) and wild birds.
- Avoid places such as poultry farms and bird markets where live birds are raised or kept.
- Avoid touching surfaces contaminated with poultry feces or secretions.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Waterless alcohol-based hand gels (containing at least 60% alcohol) may be used when soap is not available and hands are not visibly soiled.
- Cook all foods from poultry, including eggs, thoroughly. Egg yolks should not be runny or liquid. The cooking temperature for poultry meat should be 74°C (165°F).
- If you become sick with symptoms such as a fever plus a cough, sore throat or have trouble breathing, or if you develop any illness that requires prompt medical attention, a U.S. consular officer can assist you in locating medical services and informing your family or friends. Inform the health-care provider of any possible exposures to avian influenza, such as exposures to ill or dead birds.

There have not been any cases of H5N1 reported among tourists to affected areas; however, if you become ill with a fever plus a cough, sore throat or have trouble breathing within 10 days of your return, consult a health-care provider. Before you visit a health-care setting, tell the provider the following: 1) your symptoms, 2) where you traveled, and 3) if you have had direct contact with poultry or close contact with a severely ill person. This way, he or she can be aware that you have traveled to an area reporting H5N1.

For the most current travel recommendations, visit the [CDC – Traveler’s Health](http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentAvianFluAsia.aspx) website at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentAvianFluAsia.aspx>.

11. Is it safe to cook and eat chicken, other poultry and eggs?

There have been no documented cases of HPAI H5N1 infections in humans caused by eating properly cooked poultry products. Additionally, **no** poultry or poultry products from any area affected by the HPAI H5N1 virus are legally allowed to enter, or be transported within, the United States.

Poultry products should always be properly handled and cooked to prevent the spread of other illnesses such as *Salmonella*. Egg yolks should not be runny or liquid. The cooking temperature for poultry meat should be 74°C (165°F). More information about safe food handling can be found at the [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) – Safe Food Handling](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/fact_sheets/safe_food_handling_fact_sheets/index.asp) website at www.fsis.usda.gov/fact_sheets/safe_food_handling_fact_sheets/index.asp.

12. Is it safe to go to fairs or other settings where there are large numbers of birds?

Precautions are in place to make sure that poultry being shown in public settings are free of diseases. Poultry flocks must be tested for disease before they leave their home farm to be shown in another location.

Flock owners may visit fairs, farms, or other settings where there are large numbers of birds provided that appropriate biosecurity measures (precautions taken to reduce the chance of a disease being transported from one place to another) are used before and after such visits.

There are things people should do to make sure that viruses and other germs are not carried away from an infected location on clothes, shoes, vehicles or other items. Changing clothing and footwear is important; the same clothing should not be worn from one location where birds are housed to another. Vehicles and equipment should also be disinfected. For more information on the national campaign to promote avian health through biosecurity, visit the [USDA – Biosecurity for the Birds](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/birdbiosecurity/) website at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/birdbiosecurity/.

13. Is it safe to hunt, field dress and eat wild game birds?

It is safe to hunt, field dress and eat game birds in Massachusetts. As a general precaution, hunters are always advised to wear gloves when skinning and preparing any game meat (this includes both birds and mammals) and to cook meat thoroughly before eating it.

14. Is it safe to use products made from bird feathers?

There are no known cases of HPAI H5N1 virus being spread to humans by processed bird feathers in items such as down comforters, down coats, feather dusters, etc.

15. There are a lot of ducks and geese in our local pond. Is it safe to swim in?

There is limited information available on the risk of contaminated water spreading the HPAI H5N1 virus to humans. While theoretically possible, there have been no cases of human HPAI H5N1 infections definitively linked to swimming in bodies of water used by waterfowl. In addition, ongoing surveillance efforts indicate that the HPAI H5N1 virus is not present in Massachusetts or anywhere else in the United States.

If you are concerned about the conditions of a local pond or lake used for swimming, swim at a bathing beach where regular bacterial monitoring is conducted by the local public health agency or the Department of Conservation and Recreation. These agencies will test the water to make sure it has not been polluted by human or animal waste. At this time, there is no water testing done specifically for the HPAI H5N1 virus. Contact your local health department to find out about regulated bodies of water in your community. For information on bathing beach test results at marine beaches, visit the [MDPH Beach Water Quality Locator](http://www.mass.gov/MDPH/BeachWaterQualityLocator) at mass.digitalhealthdepartment.com/public%5F21.

It is a good idea to wash your hands and take a shower before and after swimming or playing in the water. Take care not to drink the water while swimming. Also, since birds may carry a variety of bacteria, viruses or parasites in their droppings, you should avoid exposure to bird droppings that may be on the shore, if possible.

16. Am I at risk of catching HPAI H5N1 avian flu from bird droppings in my garden?

The majority of people infected by the HPAI H5N1 virus have had a great deal of direct contact with infected poultry or with objects or surfaces contaminated with feces from infected poultry. Examples of direct contact would include touching sick or dead poultry, eating raw or incompletely cooked infected poultry, or touching objects contaminated by infected poultry feces.

Limited exposure, such as in a backyard, to a wild bird's droppings in Massachusetts would not be considered a risk for HPAI H5N1 infection. In addition, ongoing surveillance efforts indicate that the HPAI H5N1 virus is not present in Massachusetts or anywhere else in the United States.

However, since wild birds may carry other various bacteria, viruses or parasites in their droppings, you should avoid exposure to bird droppings, if possible, and always wear gloves and wash your hands after gardening.

17. I found a dead bird in my pool. Is it safe to swim in it?

There is no evidence of the HPAI H5N1 virus spreading to people through chlorinated water. To protect yourself from many diseases, you should keep up with the chemical maintenance requirements of your pool, particularly when a dead animal has been in the water.

II. Avian Influenza in Birds

18. How do you know that there is no HPAI H5N1 virus in Massachusetts?

There are currently multiple surveillance programs in effect for the early detection of avian flu viruses, including the HPAI H5N1 virus, in Massachusetts.

Surveillance for avian influenza viruses in domestic birds in Massachusetts is directed by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) in cooperation with the USDA. MDAR

has been screening domestic poultry from live bird markets as well as commercial and backyard flocks in Massachusetts for any avian influenza infection since 1983. For more information, please go to the [MDAR](http://www.mass.gov/agr) website at www.mass.gov/agr.

Surveillance for avian influenza viruses in wild birds in Massachusetts is directed by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MDFW) in cooperation with the USDA. For more information, visit the [MDFW](http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfw_toc.htm) website at www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfw_toc.htm. To view a national map showing the number of wild bird specimens collected and tested by state to date, visit the [National Biological Information Infrastructure -- National Avian Influenza Surveillance](http://wildlifedisease.nbio.gov/ai/) website at wildlifedisease.nbio.gov/ai/.

Surveillance for influenza viruses (human or avian) in humans is conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) in close cooperation with health care providers in Massachusetts. For more information, visit the [MDPH—Influenza](http://www.mass.gov/dph/flu) website at www.mass.gov/dph/flu.

19. How do we know that wild birds are not bringing the HPAI H5N1 virus into Massachusetts? Who is keeping track of these birds?

Surveillance of wild birds in Massachusetts for avian influenza viruses is being conducted by the MDFW in cooperation with USDA. Most birds do not need to be tested. State and federal agriculture and wildlife agencies are considering waterfowl, such as ducks and geese, as the top priority for testing. Avian influenza usually involves migratory waterfowl and shorebirds, not backyard birds.

For more information, visit the [USDA --Avian Influenza](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/lut/p/s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?navid=AVIAN_INFLUENZA&navtype=SU) website at www.usda.gov/wps/portal/lut/p/s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?navid=AVIAN_INFLUENZA&navtype=SU. To view a national map showing the number of wild bird specimens collected and tested by state to date, visit the [National Biological Information Infrastructure -- National Avian Influenza Surveillance](http://wildlifedisease.nbio.gov/ai/) website at wildlifedisease.nbio.gov/ai/.

20. I have a dead bird in my yard. Could it have died from the HPAI H5N1 virus?

Ongoing surveillance efforts indicate that the HPAI H5N1 virus is not present in Massachusetts or anywhere else in the United States. It is, therefore, extremely unlikely that an individual dead bird in Massachusetts died from an HPAI H5N1 infection. [If someone is reporting a larger group of dead birds, see Question 23.]

During the mosquito season (June-September) you may call the MDPH Information Line at 1-866-MASS-WNV to report the dead bird. The MDPH collects information about the location of dead birds during the mosquito season, and tests some of these birds for West Nile virus (WNV), to help identify areas where WNV may be present as well as help determine where additional mosquito testing should be done.

21. How can I safely dispose of a dead bird in my backyard?

While it is highly unlikely that the dead bird may have been infected with the HPAI H5N1 virus, it is generally recommended that you not touch any dead bird, or any other wild animal, with your bare hands. To dispose of a dead bird, use a shovel to scoop up the dead bird and put it in a trash bag. Then place that bag into a second bag and place it in your trash. If you must use your hands to put the dead bird in a trash bag, cover them with gloves or plastic bags. After disposing of the bird, wash your hands.

22. My local health department collects dead birds to test for West Nile virus (WNV). Why can't they test the dead bird I found in my yard for the HPAI H5N1 virus?

WNV is found throughout the United States, including Massachusetts. WNV causes death in certain kinds of wild birds, particularly crows and blue jays. The MDPH collects information about the location of dead birds during the mosquito season (June through September) and tests some of these birds for WNV, to help identify areas where WNV may be present as well as help decide where additional mosquito testing should be done. For more information about WNV and other arboviruses in Massachusetts, visit the [MDPH -- Arbovirus](http://www.mass.gov/dph/wnv/wnv1.htm) website at www.mass.gov/dph/wnv/wnv1.htm.

Surveillance for avian influenza in wild birds is directed by the MDFW. Field biologists are taking samples around the state from certain bird species identified by the USDA as primary species to monitor for avian influenza. Testing individual dead birds found by the general public for the HPAI H5N1 virus is not a part of the MDFW surveillance program at this time.

For more information on avian influenza surveillance in Massachusetts in wild birds, visit the [MDFW website at www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfw_toc.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfw_toc.htm). To view a national map showing the number of wild bird specimens collected and tested by state to date, visit the [National Biological Information Infrastructure -- National Avian Influenza Surveillance](http://wildlifedisease.nbi.gov/ai/) website at wildlifedisease.nbi.gov/ai/.

23. A large group of birds has suddenly died in my backyard or at my local recreation area. What do I do?

Please report sick, dying, or recently dead waterfowl (duck and geese), shorebirds (sandpipers, plovers) or other waterbirds (herons) found at any location(s) to the MDFW, Westboro Field Headquarters at 508-389-6300 or the USDA at 413-253-2403.

Larger bird die-offs of other species can be reported to the closest district office of the MDFW.

Western Wildlife District in Pittsfield—413-447-9789

Connecticut Valley Wildlife District in Belchertown—413-323-7632

Central Wildlife District in West Boylston—508-835-3607

Northeast Wildlife District in Acton—978-263-4347

Southeast Wildlife District in Buzzards Bay—508-759-3406

24. There are several wild birds in my yard. Can I kill them?

It is illegal to hunt or kill wild birds except for game species during their designated hunting seasons and in designated hunting areas. For more information about migratory bird hunting and other hunting regulations in Massachusetts, view the [MDFW -- Migratory Bird Regulations](http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/regulations/abstracts/migratory_bird_regs.pdf) document at http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/regulations/abstracts/migratory_bird_regs.pdf.

25. There are a lot of Canada geese around my child's school. Can my child catch the HPAI H5N1 virus from them?

Even though billions of people live in areas where the HPAI H5N1 virus has been identified in wild birds, there has only been a single event where wild birds were thought to be responsible for a human infection. The event occurred in Azerbaijan after a massive die-off of swans in February 2006. A family is believed to have become infected after plucking feathers from one of the infected swans.

Canada geese are a species of bird that is being tested by the MDFW as part of their surveillance for avian influenza in wild birds in Massachusetts [See Question 18]. At this time, there is no evidence of HPAI H5N1 virus in Massachusetts.

You should instruct your child to avoid the birds since there are other viruses, bacteria (such as *Salmonella*), and parasites that can spread through their droppings. To date, no outbreak of human disease has been linked to Canada geese. For more information on Canada geese in Massachusetts, visit the [MDFW -- Canada Geese in Massachusetts](http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfwgoose.htm) website at www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfwgoose.htm.

26. My child's class is hatching chicks in the classroom. Is my child at risk for catching the HPAI H5N1 virus?

At this time, this type of activity would not be considered a risk for HPAI H5N1 infection. Ongoing surveillance efforts indicate that the HPAI H5N1 virus is not present in Massachusetts or anywhere else in the United States. Additionally, **no** poultry or poultry products, including eggs, from any area affected by the HPAI H5N1 virus are legally allowed to enter, or be transported within, the United States.

In order to protect against other diseases that may be spread through contact with poultry, children should be instructed to wash their hands after handling chicks. For more information about safely keeping animals in classrooms, view the [MDPH -- Animals in the Classroom: Recommendations for Schools](http://www.mass.gov/dph/epi) document which can be accessed from www.mass.gov/dph/epi.

27. I have a bird feeder which attracts wild birds to my yard. Am I at increased risk for catching the HPAI H5N1 virus?

Even though billions of people live in areas where the HPAI H5N1 virus has been identified in wild birds, there has only been a single event where wild birds were thought to be responsible for a human infection. The event occurred in Azerbaijan after a massive die-off of swans in February 2006. A family is believed to have become infected after plucking feathers from one of the infected swans.

Ongoing surveillance efforts indicate that the HPAI H5N1 virus is not present in Massachusetts or anywhere else in the United States. However, since wild birds may carry other bacteria, viruses or parasites in their droppings, you should avoid exposure to bird droppings, if possible, and always wash your hands after handling your bird feeder.

28. Can the health department stop people from feeding birds?

There are currently no state public health laws that prohibit people from feeding birds. Contact your local government offices to find out if there are specific local ordinances regarding bird feeding in your city or town. Additionally, some neighborhood homeowners' associations have adopted rules that restrict bird feeding.

III. Avian Influenza and Pets

29. Is pet food that contains chicken or chicken products safe to give my pet?

The HPAI H5N1 virus is destroyed by cooking at temperatures above 158°F (70°C). The high temperatures required to make commercial pet food eliminate the risk of infection in pets that only eat these foods. Pets should never be fed uncooked meat or eggs.

30. My pet cat or dog had a dead bird in its mouth. Could it catch the HPAI H5N1 virus? Could my pet then make me sick?

Keep in mind that ongoing surveillance efforts indicate that the HPAI H5N1 virus is not present in Massachusetts or anywhere else in the United States.

Occasional HPAI H5N1 infections in cats have been reported in areas of the world experiencing outbreaks in domestic or wild birds. All of the cases of HPAI H5N1 infection in domestic cats are thought to have occurred by the cat eating raw infected birds. Clinical signs in naturally infected cats have not been described, but signs in experimentally infected cats include fever, listlessness, difficulty breathing, conjunctivitis (swelling and redness of the membranes around the eyes) and death. Pet owners should remember that these signs are commonly encountered in cats with other diseases. Any signs of illness in your pet should be discussed with your veterinarian. **There has been no evidence of the virus spreading from cats to humans.**

An unpublished study carried out in 2005 by the National Institute of Animal Health in Bangkok indicated that several dogs had been exposed to the H5N1 virus and developed antibodies against the virus. Researchers in the Netherlands found that dogs exposed to the H5N1 virus in a laboratory setting did become infected though they did not show any symptoms [Maas 2007]. There is one published report of death in a dog in Thailand due to natural infection with the H5N1 virus [Songserm 2006]. The dog was probably exposed by eating an infected duck. **There has been no evidence of the virus spreading from dogs to humans.**

As a general precaution, pets should not be allowed to feed on dead wild birds. Pets should never be fed uncooked meat or eggs. If your pet is ill, talk with your veterinarian about proper diagnosis and treatment.

For more information on avian influenza in animals, including dogs and cats, visit the [American Veterinary Medical Association](http://www.avma.org/public_health/influenza/avian_faq.asp) website at www.avma.org/public_health/influenza/avian_faq.asp or the [CDC - Pandemic Flu](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/faq/bird/1104.html) website at www.pandemicflu.gov/faq/bird/1104.html.

31. Are my pet birds at risk for catching the HPAI H5N1 virus?

At this time, the risk of HPAI H5N1 to indoor pet birds is extremely low. Ongoing surveillance efforts indicate that the HPAI H5N1 virus is not present in Massachusetts or anywhere else in the United States.

Additionally, there are multiple safeguards in place to prevent the virus from entering the United States. No poultry or poultry products from any area affected by the HPAI H5N1 virus are legally allowed to enter, or be transported within, the United States. Birds that may be legally imported are quarantined (kept away from other birds to observe for signs of illness) and tested upon entry into the United States, before they are made available for purchase.

As a general precaution, pet birds should not be allowed to come into contact with wild birds. It is recommended that ill birds or newly acquired birds be isolated (kept away) from other birds for 30 days. If your pet bird is ill, talk with your veterinarian.

For general recommendations on safe handling of pet birds, view the [MDPH – Happy and Healthy: Your Pet Bird and You](http://www.mass.gov/dph/epi) document which can be accessed from www.mass.gov/dph/epi.

IV. Avian Influenza and Poultry

32. I keep a flock of chickens in my yard. How can I protect myself?

Flock owners can protect themselves by avoiding face-to-bird contact, employing proper handwashing methods, wearing disposable or designated clothing and shoes in poultry areas and by assuring that items and equipment used in poultry areas are not used in other locations or living spaces unless properly disinfected. Using proven biosecurity measures can minimize risks. These measures include protecting the flock from exposure to potential sources of avian influenza (i.e., wild birds) and limiting access to poultry areas only to people and equipment necessary for the care and maintenance of the flock. For more information on the national campaign to promote avian health through biosecurity, visit the USDA – Biosecurity for the Birds website at www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/birdbiosecurity/.

33. Can I vaccinate my poultry against the HPAI H5N1 virus?

At the present time, there is no vaccine against the HPAI H5N1 virus available for use in backyard/breeder flocks.

34. How can I prevent my chickens from becoming infected?

Do not allow the flock to have contact with wild birds and any waterfowl. Proper enclosures will help with this. Access to poultry and the premises where they are kept should be restricted to people and vehicles necessary to the maintenance of the flock. Prohibit contact with equipment and items that have been in contact with other poultry or potential sources of avian flu. Employ appropriate cleaning and disinfection methods to safeguard against disease. Wear disposable or designated clothing and shoes when in contact with poultry to avoid potential contamination. For more information on the national campaign to promote avian health through biosecurity, visit the USDA – Biosecurity for the Birds website at www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/birdbiosecurity/.

35. Several of my chickens have suddenly died. Who should I call?

Flock owners should maintain a good working relationship with their veterinarian. Any time there is illness or sudden death within the flock, owners should contact their veterinarian. In the event that the veterinarian cannot be reached, contact the MDAR, Division of Biosecurity and Regulatory Services at (617) 626-1795.

36. My neighbor raises chickens and I'm worried about catching the HPAI H5N1 virus. What should I do?

Ongoing surveillance efforts indicate that the HPAI H5N1 virus is not present in Massachusetts or anywhere else in the United States. **If you are concerned, you should avoid direct contact with your neighbor's chickens and their droppings or secretions.** To protect yourself from all flu viruses, remember to always practice good hand hygiene.

When any strain of HPAI infects poultry, it is generally a noticeable event since it causes most of the birds to die very quickly. In areas where HPAI H5N1 infection is present in birds, the majority of people infected by the HPAI H5N1 virus had a great deal of direct contact with infected poultry or with objects or surfaces contaminated with feces from infected poultry. Examples of direct contact would include touching sick or dead poultry, eating raw or incompletely cooked infected poultry, or touching objects heavily contaminated by infected poultry feces.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For the latest information on the worldwide HPAI H5N1 outbreak, visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov or the WHO – Avian Influenza website at www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html

For more information about avian flu in wild birds or game birds (quail, pheasants) in Massachusetts, visit the MDFW website at www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfw_toc.htm.

For more information about avian flu in domestic birds (chickens) or pets (cats, dogs, pet birds) in Massachusetts, contact the MDAR, Division of Biosecurity and Regulatory Services at (617) 626-1795 or visit their website at www.mass.gov/agr/animalhealth/poultry/avian_influenza.htm.

For more information about any type of flu in people or pandemic flu planning in Massachusetts, contact the MDPH, Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at 617-983-6800 or online at www.mass.gov/dph/epi.

ONLINE RESOURCES NOTED IN THIS DOCUMENT:

American Veterinary Medical Association – Avian Influenza Frequently Asked Questions
www.avma.org/public_health/influenza/avian_faq.asp

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention -- Traveler's Health Website
www.cdc.gov/travel/other/avian_influenza_se_asia_2005.htm

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Bird Flu and Pets
www.pandemicflu.gov/faq/bird/1104.html

Massachusetts Department of Public Health – Animals in the Classroom: Recommendations for Schools
www.mass.gov/dph/epi

Massachusetts Department of Public Health -- Arbovirus Website
www.mass.gov/dph/wnv/wnv1.htm

Massachusetts Department of Public Health -- Handwashing Website
<http://www.mass.gov/dph/epi>

Massachusetts Department of Public Health -- Influenza Website
www.mass.gov/dph/flu

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife -- Canada Geese in Massachusetts
www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfwgoose.htm

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife -- Migratory Bird Regulations
http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/regulations/abstracts/migratory_bird_regs.pdf

National Biological Information Infrastructure -- National Avian Influenza Surveillance Website
<http://wildlifedisease.nbio.gov/ai/>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration – Protecting Poultry Workers
www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib121304.html

United States Department of Agriculture -- Avian Influenza Website
www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/.s.7.0.A/7.0.1OB?navid=AVIAN_INFLUENZA&navtype=SU

United States Department of Agriculture -- Biosecurity for the Birds
www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/birdbiosecurity

United States Department of Agriculture—Safe Food Handling Practices
www.fsis.usda.gov/fact_sheets/safe_food_handling_fact_sheets/index.asp

If you have questions about your animal’s health, please contact your veterinarian. If you have questions about your own health, please contact your doctor.

* The Animal Surveillance and Education Committee includes representatives from the following agencies:

Federal Agencies:

USDA-Veterinary Services
USDA-Wildlife Services
USDA-Animal Care
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Massachusetts State Agencies:

Department of Public Health and State Laboratory Institute
Department of Agricultural Resources
Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
Department of Environmental Protection
Department of Environmental Management
Emergency Management Agency

Private:

Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Humane Society of the United States – Cape Wildlife Center
Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association
Cape Cod Rabies Task Force
Massachusetts Animal Control Officers Association
ZooNewEngland
New England Aquarium
Acambis