

# What To Know About Bird Flu



## About Bird Flu

Bird flu is a disease caused by certain flu viruses that usually spreads between birds, not people. Infected birds can spread the virus through their mucous, saliva or feces. People rarely get bird flu, but when they do, it's most often through direct unprotected contact (no gloves, protective wear, facemasks, respirators or eye protection) with infected birds. People can become infected by breathing virus in droplets in the air or possibly dust, or by touching surfaces contaminated with infected bird mucous, saliva or feces and then touching their eyes, mouth or nose. Human illness from bird flu has ranged from no symptoms at all to severe illness, resulting in death.

## Types of Birds That Can be Sick with Bird Flu

Wild birds that can be infected with bird flu viruses include waterbirds, like ducks, geese and swans, and shorebirds, like storks. Bird flu can spread from wild birds to poultry, like chickens and turkeys. While most wild birds can be infected with bird flu viruses without being sick, poultry, like chickens and turkeys, can get very sick and die from certain bird flu viruses. If you have poultry, your birds can get bird flu if they have contact with infected wild birds or share food, water sources and other environments with them. Most common songbirds or other birds found in the yard, like cardinals, robins, sparrows, blue jays, crows or pigeons, do not get infected with the bird flu viruses that can be dangerous to poultry or possibly spread to people.

## Selected Images of Birds that Can be Infected with Bird Flu



Ducks



Swans



Geese



Chickens



Turkeys

## Have You Had Contact with an Infected or Sick Bird?

### If you had contact with infected birds as a bird flu outbreak responder:

If you had close contact with infected birds or surfaces contaminated by them because you are responding to a bird flu outbreak as part of your job, your state or local health department should contact you. If you have not been contacted by your state or local health department after your exposure, contact them as soon as you can so they can help monitor your health. In the meantime, watch for the symptoms listed on the next page.

If you begin experiencing symptoms while you are still responding to a bird flu outbreak, contact your Safety Officer and let them know about your symptoms. Your Safety Officer will update your state or local health department about your illness.

## If you are a hunter who had close contact with potentially infected wild birds:

Wild birds can carry bird flu without appearing sick. As a general precaution, people should not harvest or handle wild birds that are obviously sick or found dead. Hunters who handle wild birds should dress game birds in the field when possible and practice good biosecurity to prevent any potential disease spread. If possible, wear gloves when dressing birds, and wash hands with soap and water afterwards. USDA has more information available on preventive actions for hunters: [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal\\_health/2015/fsc\\_hpai\\_hunters.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/2015/fsc_hpai_hunters.pdf).

If you had close contact with obviously sick or dead wild birds, or surfaces contaminated by them, contact your state or local health department. In the meantime, watch for the symptoms listed below. If you develop symptoms, contact your state or local health department.

## If you had close contact with infected backyard poultry or other hobbyist flocks:

Poultry are likely to appear sick when they are infected with bird flu. If you had close contact with obviously sick or dead poultry, or surfaces contaminated by them, contact your state or local health department. In the meantime, watch for the symptoms listed below. USDA also has information available on preventive actions for bird owners: [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal\\_health/card-defend-the-flock.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/card-defend-the-flock.pdf).

## Your health department will decide how you are monitored

This monitoring could include contacting you daily by phone, email or text to ask about how you feel for 10 days after you were last exposed. They may also ask that you get tested for bird flu if you have symptoms. Please follow their instructions.

## Your state or local health department will ask you to watch for these symptoms

During the 10 days after your last exposure, you should watch for these symptoms:

- Fever (Temperature of 100°F [37.8°C] or greater)
- Feeling feverish/Chills\*
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Difficulty breathing/Shortness of breath
- Eye tearing, redness or irritation
- Headaches
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Diarrhea

\*Fever may not always be present



It is important to watch for symptoms and follow your local or state health department's instructions even if your contact was short and you took safety measures. Report any symptoms to your state or local health department right away.

## You May Be Prescribed Flu Antiviral Drugs



If you get sick after being exposed to sick or potentially infected birds, a health care provider may write you a prescription for an antiviral drug to treat your illness. It's important to take the medication as directed as soon as possible.

