

# Avian Influenza



## WHAT IS IT?

**Avian Influenza (AI)** or “bird flu” is a large group of viruses that can infect all species of birds with varying symptoms depending on the species. Low pathogenic AI strains are common, typically causing no or only minor symptoms and posing little significant threat to human health. High pathogenic AI (HPAI) can infect domestic chicken or turkey flocks, spreading rapidly with high mortality. Wild birds also can transmit it among flocks. HPAI H5N1 is rapidly spreading in some parts of the world. Infected flocks need to be de-populated with proper disposal of carcasses to prevent further transmission.

## WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- In the last 20 years, there have been:
  - 873 human cases of Influenza A (H5N1)
  - 458 deaths from 21 countries
- HPAI has occurred in wild mammals, with 3 farmworkers in US and Spain infected in 2022 with no or mild symptoms.
- AI in poultry poses risk to humans from exposure to infected poultry or contaminated environments, but this occurs only from prolonged unprotected contact.
- No human-to-human transmission has occurred, but global concern is that it could mutate by combining with human flu strains
- CDC and WHO believe the risk to humans is low.

## MOST COMMON SYMPTOMS IN HUMANS



sore throat



runny nose



pink eye



fever



cough



shortness of breath



aches and pain



fatigue



headache

## WHAT DO I DO ABOUT IT?

1. Proper handling and cooking of poultry provides protection against AI and pathogens like *Salmonella*.
2. Anyone working with poultry or birds should get an annual flu shot to reduce the risk of HPAI mutation.
3. People with work or recreational exposure to birds/infected mammals should protect themselves by:
  - Minimizing contact with wild birds or sick or dead poultry by wearing gloves
  - Washing hands with soap and water after touching birds.
  - Wearing respiratory protection, preferably an N95 respirator if available, or a well-fitting facemask
  - Avoiding touching the mouth, nose, or eyes after contact with birds or surfaces that may be contaminated with their saliva, mucous, or feces.
  - Changing clothes before contact with healthy domestic poultry and after handling wild birds. Then, throwing away the gloves and facemask, and washing hands with soap and water.
4. Public health officials may implement testing of asymptomatic exposed persons to further strengthen surveillance around HPAI outbreaks in poultry farms.
5. Development of vaccines for birds is underway.

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