



# Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza FAQ's

## *For Animal Control Officers*

[Avian influenza](#), or “bird flu”, is a contagious viral disease that occurs naturally in birds. The disease varies in severity depending on the strain and species affected. Migratory birds commonly have avian influenza and sometimes spread it to domestic birds directly or indirectly through the environment.

Avian influenza can be classified as either highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) or low pathogenic depending on how lethal the virus is.

### **What is Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza?**

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), also referred to as H5N1, is a virus found among various species of birds. It is highly contagious among domestic poultry and has a mortality rate of nearly 100%. It can infect domestic poultry, including chickens, turkeys, quail, geese, ducks, pheasants, and guinea fowl. Currently there is no effective treatment or approved vaccine for the virus in poultry.

The virus also infects a wide variety of other birds, including wild migratory waterfowl. Starting in 2024, HPAI has been detected in various species of mammals, likely after contact with infected wild birds.

### **Who should I contact regarding sick or dead birds?**

To report sick domestic birds (chickens, turkeys, etc.), including unexplained high number of deaths, sudden drop in egg production, or sudden reduction in feed or water intake, contact the State Veterinarian at **860-713-2505** or [ctstate.vet@ct.gov](mailto:ctstate.vet@ct.gov) or the USDA at **866-536-7593**. Upon notification the State Veterinarian will provide further guidance on next steps.

If you see several dead migratory birds (more than 5) in one location or notice that several birds die in the same area over the course of several days, CT DEEP encourages you to report it. At the present time, DEEP is not continuing to test geese or other waterfowl, but testing may be warranted for raptors or species not considered highly susceptible. If you

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observe this type of die-off, in addition to filling out [this form](#), please call the DEEP Wildlife Division at **860-424-3011**.

### **How do I protect myself?**

As part of your routine duties, you may have to handle birds that could potentially be infected with HPAI. You should take extra precautions; and have the following personal protective equipment (PPE) items with you when you respond:

- Coveralls
- Goggles or eye protection
- Shoe covers or boots that can be disinfected
- Gloves – latex, nitrile, or rubber
- If possible, a respirator (NIOSH N95 respirator / mask)

Clean and disinfect hands, equipment, and any surface that had contact with the sick birds – this includes your vehicle.

If you need PPE, you can request it through [this form](#).

### **How should I handle or dispose of dead migratory birds?**

If you receive a call from the public about dead birds, they should be advised to not touch the birds.

**Migratory Birds:** If you must have direct/close contact with infected or potentially infected birds, you should wear recommended PPE. When handling dead birds, avoid direct contact. You should wear gloves or use a shovel to place the bird in a plastic bag. Tie that bag off and place inside a second plastic bag before tying that bag off as well. Spray the outside of the second bag with a 10% bleach solution, as well as the area where the dead bird was found, and any implements used to collect the bird, along with boots or shoes worn while disposing of the dead bird. Double-bagged dead birds should be disposed of in the trash. Always wash hands thoroughly after disposal.

There may be instances of deceased migratory birds in locations that make removal difficult or hazardous (e.g. frozen in river ice). In these situations, they should likely be left in place. If a municipality is unable to leave them where they are, they are responsible for removal and disposal following the protocols for safe collection and disposal.

*Note: CT DEEP is only collecting deceased migratory birds if they are being submitted for necropsy/disease testing. They are no longer testing geese or other waterfowl unless circumstances warrant.*

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### **What should I do if a bird I handled was taken for testing?**

If you have handled a bird that is submitted for testing, please make sure to provide your name and contact information to the submitter. They will notify you of a positive result. If the bird is positive, contact your local health department (<https://portal.ct.gov/dph>).

### **HPAI Resources**

[Avian Influenza in Domestic Birds and Livestock \(CT DoAg\)](#)

[Avian Influenza in Wild Birds \(CT DEEP\)](#)

[Wild Bird Mortality Reporting \(CT DEEP\)](#)

[Human Infections \(CT DPH\)](#)

[Human H5N1 Cases in the U.S. \(CDC\)](#)

[USDA Avian Influenza](#)