

frequently asked questions



What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza is an infection caused by avian influenza viruses. These influenza viruses naturally occur among birds. Wild birds worldwide carry the viruses in their intestines but usually do not get sick from them. However, avian influenza is very contagious among birds and can make some domestic birds, including chickens, ducks and turkeys, very sick and kill them.

Can people catch the avian flu?

It is not easy for humans to contract the avian flu at this time, however it is possible. Of those people that have contracted avian influenza almost all had direct contact with an infected bird.

How does avian flu spread to humans?

Infected birds spread germs through their saliva, nasal secretions, feces and urine. Germs can also be spread because of contaminated surfaces. Though a bird may not show signs of the flu they can still spread the disease to both other birds and to humans.

Is it safe to travel to other countries?

No travel warnings related to avian influenza exist at this time; however, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will issue travel warnings if it becomes necessary. Travel recommendations are regularly updated at www.cdc.gov/travel. When traveling to countries that have identified the H5N1 virus, travelers should avoid contact with both live and dead birds, bird cages and poultry cooking equipment.

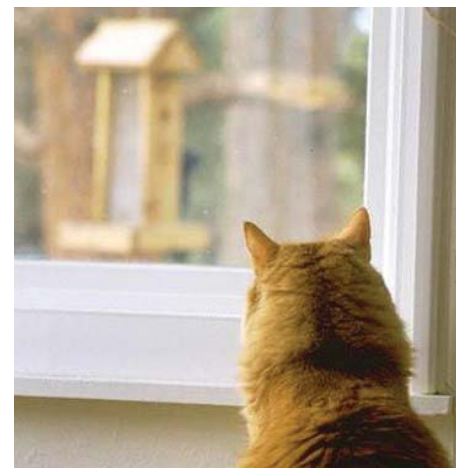
Can pets contract avian flu?

Ultimately, all carnivores can become infected with avian flu through eating under-cooked or raw infected wild and commercial poultry.

According to the The American Veterinary Medical Association, cats can become infected with avian flu and can transmit the virus to other cats, but the most likely way a cat would contract the H5N1 virus would be by consuming raw poultry infected with the virus. At this time, there is not evidence suggesting you can contract avian flu from your cat.

Scientific studies have not been conducted on other domestic animals. To help protect your pets make sure they do not eat any raw meat and monitor all the other animals your pet comes into contact with. If you suspect your pet is sick contact your veterinarian.

It is possible for domestic birds to contract avian flu; however, since the H5N1 virus has not been found in the United States it is unlikely at this time.





Is it safe to hunt and eat wild bird?

Because H5N1 has not yet reached the states, hunting wild birds is safe. As always properly cooking any poultry is necessary and hunters should use gloves when handling game birds. Always wash your hands after handling wild game.

What will be done to stop an infection among birds in the United States once it occurs?

In the event of a commercial poultry outbreak, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will quarantine,

humanely kill, monitor, disinfect, and test all necessary birds and surrounding locations. In the event of a wild bird outbreak the USDA will conduct extensive testing in the flyway of other wild birds, commercial poultry operations and backyard flocks. For more information visit www.usda.gov.

Is it safe to eat poultry and eggs?

Yes, eating properly handled and cooked poultry and eggs is safe. Poultry products imported into the United States must meet all safety standards and no poultry from countries with confirmed bird flu (H5N1) can be imported into the United States. To avoid spreading germs while handling raw meat:

- Wash hands before and after handling food.
- Prevent cross-contamination by keeping raw meat, poultry, fish and their juices away from other foods.
- Wash hands, cutting board, knife, and counter tops with hot, soapy water after cutting raw meats.
- Sanitize cutting boards by using a solution of 1 teaspoon chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water.
- Use a food thermometer to ensure food has reached proper temperatures. Poultry should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 165° F and dishes containing eggs to 160° F.

What can I do to prepare for avian flu?

Create a pandemic plan, both for your family and business. The *Ready in 3* initiative highlights three steps you can take to prepare for any emergency: create a plan for you, your family, and your business; prepare a kit for home, car and work; and listen to local and national news outlets for information about what to do and where to go during an actual emergency.

Visit www.columbuspandemicflu.com for more information on *Ready in 3* and how to prepare for an emergency.

Is the United States at risk for a pandemic flu?

The possibility always exists for a virus to mutate and become the next pandemic flu. A pandemic occurs when:

- a new influenza virus emerges into the human population
- the new virus causes severe illness and
- the virus spreads easily from person to person.

For a virus to be considered a pandemic it must meet all three conditions.

The avian flu meets two of the three conditions; it does not spread easily from person to person. **Currently there is no pandemic flu anywhere in the world.**



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For more information contact kjsmith@franklincountyohio.gov or visit www.columbuspandemicflu.com

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