
NEWS RELEASE



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Media contact: Michelle Dennehy, ODFW, (503) 947-6022
Internet: www.dfw.state.or.us Fax: (503) 947-6009

For Immediate Release

Monday, November 19, 2007

State and federal agencies continue avian flu monitoring efforts

SALEM, OR. – The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continue to monitor wild birds in Oregon as part of a nationwide effort aimed at the early detection of a serious form of avian influenza or “bird flu.”

With the annual wild bird migration and bird hunting seasons under way, Oregonians can help: hunters may be asked to have their duck or goose tested for the disease and others can report dead birds to a special toll-free hotline at 1-866-968-2600.

Wild birds are known to carry various strains of avian influenza, often without serious health effects. An exception is the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 (HPAI H5N1) form which has sickened and killed birds in Asia, Europe and Africa. It has also sickened and killed people in Asia and Africa. HPAI H5N1 has never been detected in North America.

ODFW, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services have tested more than 4,000 wild birds in Oregon for avian influenza since early detection efforts began last year. None have tested positive for HPAI H5N1 but testing efforts continue.

Following are details on how hunters, wildlife viewers, and members of the public can help monitor for avian flu and precautions they can take to protect themselves from wildlife disease.

Report dead birds to toll free hotline 1-866-968-2600

People who see dead birds are asked to report the sighting to ODFW’s reporting hotline 1-866-968-2600 if:

- Multiple birds are involved, indicating illness or a die-off from a pathogen or contaminant.

- If the dead or sick bird is a duck, goose, swan, or shorebird (sandpiper, phalarope, dowitcher), species that have been shown to be carriers of HPAI H5N1 in other parts of the world. Call if the incident includes single or multiple birds.
- If the incident is unusual or unexplained (bird acting sick, dies suddenly while flying).
- Corvids such as crows, ravens and jays are natural hosts for West Nile Virus. Large or continuous die-offs of these types of birds should be reported to the county health department or your local ODFW office.

Callers to the reporting line will be asked to leave their name, telephone number, the date of the call, the number of dead birds and the location of the birds and (if known) the species and approximately how long the bird(s) have been dead.

Reports are reviewed by ODFW wildlife biologists or veterinarians, who respond as appropriate. Large or unusual bird die-offs are investigated and birds known to be carriers of HPAI H5N1 in other parts of the world, such as waterfowl and shorebirds, are usually tested.

Birds suspected to have died from trauma (hitting a window or vehicle) or predation (by cat or other animal) should not be reported. These dead birds can be safely disposed of using the following steps:

- Do not come into direct contact with the dead bird when picking it up—wear disposable rubber gloves or use a plastic bag or a long-handed shovel.
- Place the dead bird in a sealed garbage bag and then in a garbage can or dumpster which is also secure so that children, pets and wild animals cannot access it.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or with alcohol-based hand products) afterwards; wash any tools used too.

Precautions for hunters and wildlife viewers

Bird hunters may be asked to have their harvested duck or goose tested for the disease by wildlife biologists they encounter in the field, or when visiting check stations at state wildlife areas or federal refuges.

Hunters should also take the following routine hygiene precautions when handling and cleaning game birds:

- Wear rubber or disposable latex gloves while handling and cleaning game birds.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke or touch your face with the gloves while you are handling or cleaning game birds.
- Keep the game bird and its juices away from other foods.
- Thoroughly clean knives and all other equipment and surfaces that come in contact with the bird. Sanitize cutting boards and other utensils by using one third cup of chlorine bleach in one gallon of water.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or with alcohol-based hand products if your hands are not visibly soiled) after handling the bird

- Cook all game meat thoroughly (up to at least 165°F) to kill disease organisms and parasites. Use a food thermometer to ensure the inside of the bird has reached at least 165°F.

Bird watchers and people with wild bird feeders should also take some common-sense precautions.

- Avoid touching wild birds or other wildlife and if you do, wash your hands immediately and before touching your face, eating, or smoking.
- Use disposable or washable gloves when cleaning or handling backyard feeders, bird baths or other equipment. Wash your hands thoroughly after handling bird baths and feeders.
- If you find a dead bird, follow the instructions above to report or safely dispose of the bird.

For more information on avian flu, visit

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/avian-flu/> or

<http://www.avianflu.gov/>