

Avian Flu

What is it?

- A viral infection that can affect all type of birds. People can get avian flu, but it is very rare.
- At least 15 types of avian flu are known at present.
- Symptoms may include:
 - fever
 - cough
 - aching muscles
 - sore throat
 - eye infections
 - serious respiratory (lung) infections
- People at the greatest risk of getting avian flu are those with small backyard poultry flocks. Taking care of poultry flocks increases the chance of exposure and infection.

How is it spread?

- The virus does not spread easily or quickly from person-to-person.
- The virus is spread from bird to bird.
- The virus can be spread in bird droppings and respiratory fluids.
- The virus can pass to domestic poultry flocks which are more likely to become seriously ill and even die when infected.
- Wild birds can carry the virus in their bodies without it causing them any harm.

Is there treatment for it?

- Certain anti-viral drugs used to fight human flu may also help prevent serious illness in people who become infected.

What can be done to prevent the spread of it?

For people who hunt wild game

The risk of catching the virus from wild birds is very low. To reduce the risk even more, if you hunt and eat wild birds use these safety tips:

- Do not handle or eat sick birds or birds that have died from an unknown illness.
- Cook game meat well to a temperature of about 160°F.

For people who hunt wild game (continued)

- Avoid contact with blood, feces and respiratory fluids.
- Remove and wash contaminated clothing right away.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke when cleaning wild game birds.
- Wear dish gloves or latex gloves when handling/cleaning game.
- Keep young children away when cleaning game birds.
- Do not let children play in areas that could be contaminated with wild bird droppings.
- Tell your doctor if you become ill while handling birds, or shortly after handling birds.
- Contact your local or provincial wildlife authority, if you see sick or dead birds and think that disease might be involved,

Decrease your risks

- Get a flu shot.
- Keep your hands clean with either soap and water or alcohol based hand rub.
- Carry alcohol based hand rub with you in case you need it.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve – not your hand.
- Do not get too close to someone who is coughing and sneezing.

For more information

Public Health Agency of Canada website:

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/avian-eng.php>

