

Know the FACTS

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), also known as bird flu, is a virus that mainly affects wild birds but also can spread to poultry (primarily chickens) and other animals. It is caused by avian influenza Type A viruses. Though bird flu rarely infects humans, people can get sick if they come into contact with infected birds or animals, such as poultry or cattle.

What is bird flu?

Bird flu is a contagious viral disease that causes what humans know as the flu. Bird flu is caused by infection with avian influenza Type A viruses such as H5N1 and H7N9. These viruses spread naturally in wild aquatic birds, poultry and other animal species such as dairy cattle.



How does bird flu spread?

Infected birds can spread the virus through their saliva, mucus and feces. Some other animals might carry the virus in their respiratory secretions, organs, blood, or other bodily fluids — even in their milk. Although bird flu infections in humans are uncommon, they can occur if enough of the virus enters a person's eyes, nose or mouth or is breathed in. There currently is no evidence that a person infected with bird flu can infect someone else.

Who is at risk?

People who spend a lot of time around infected animals without proper protection like masks and goggles may be at greater risk of bird flu infection. Poultry producers or processors, veterinarians, farmers, ranchers, people who raise backyard poultry or work in bird rehabilitation centers, and other livestock handlers may be at greater risk of contracting bird flu, as they frequently come into contact with animals that can be sick with it.

How can I protect myself from bird flu?

Generally, the risk of humans contracting bird flu is low. The best way to protect against contracting bird flu is to avoid direct contact with wild birds, sick or dead poultry, and other animals such as cows. Bird owners or people who have backyard flocks should practice good personal hygiene and prevent contact between their flocks and wild birds.

Can bird flu spread through food products?

The risk of contracting bird flu among the general population is low. The best way to prevent bird flu is to avoid direct contact with wild birds or sick or dead poultry or other animals such as cows. Bird owners or people who have backyard flocks should practice good hygiene and prevent contact between their birds and wild birds.

Get more facts.

Find more information about bird flu from the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control at cdc.gov/bird-flu.



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