

AVIAN INFLUENZA (BIRD FLU)

Note: Avian influenza (bird flu) is a federally reportable disease under the *Health of Animals Act*. Attending veterinarians and owners are encouraged to report suspect cases of bird flu by contacting their [local district CFIA office](#).

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza (bird flu) is a disease caused by the Type A (H5N1) influenza virus that can affect all bird species including chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, domestic ducks, geese and guinea fowl.

Bird flu is spread through direct contact from an infected bird to a healthy bird. Bird flu is also spread when a healthy bird comes in contact with equipment and/or materials (including water and feed) that have been contaminated with feces and/or secretions from infected birds.

Most bird flu viruses do not cause disease in humans. However, there are some strains that can spread to humans, typically through exposure to infected poultry or contaminated environments, such as farms, live poultry markets and slaughterhouses. It is recommended that people working with poultry wear [proper protective gear](#), including face mask, goggles, gloves and boots.

What are the signs of avian influenza in the bird population?

Birds infected with avian influenza may exhibit the following signs:

- Loss or lack of appetite
- Lethargy, namely a lack of energy or movement
- Tremors or lack of coordination
- Decreased egg production for poultry or pet birds
- Swelling around the head, neck and eyes
- Other symptoms such as diarrhea, and potentially sudden death

Avian influenza has an incubation period in birds (which is the time from when they become infected with the virus to when they show symptoms) of two to 14 days.

How to protect yourself from sick birds and animals

- Stay away from wild birds, and if necessary, observe from a distance
- Obtain domestic birds from a reputable source; do not keep or care for wild birds
- Avoid contact with domestic birds (poultry) that appear to be sick or have died
- Avoid contact with surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces (droppings) from wild or domestic birds

PUBLIC HEALTH

1-877-464-9675

TTY: 1-866-512-6228 (for the deaf or hard of hearing)

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- [Wash hands](#) thoroughly with soap and water immediately after unavoidable contact with birds or their droppings
- Practice safe [food handling and cooking practices](#) for poultry and poultry products (eggs)
- **If you see a sick or dead wild bird, do not touch it or go near it.** You can report a sick or dead bird to Animal Control or Animal Services within the municipality where the bird was found. Be prepared to submit additional details (e.g., location of the bird, options for carcass submission) to ensure the respective municipality can arrange to pick up and submit the animal(s) for testing
- To reduce the spread of avian influenza, consider removing backyard bird feeders and/or bird baths, and if this is not permissible, move them far away from pets, clean them with 10% bleach at least once every two weeks and then wash hands thoroughly

For more information contact your municipal animal services office:

Towns of Aurora, East Gwillimbury and Georgina Animal Services

Call 1-877-979-PAWS (7297) or email animalservices@aurora.ca

Cities of Vaughan and Richmond Hill and Township of King Animal Services

Call 1-855-227-7297 (PAWS) or email animal.services@vaughan.ca

City of Markham Animal Care Services

Call 905-415-7531 or email customerservice@markham.ca

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Animal Services

Call 905-640-1900 Ext. 2230 or email animalservices@townofws.ca

Additional resources

- CFIA FAQ documents on Avian Influenza: <https://inspection.canada.ca/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/avian-influenza/fact-sheet/eng/1356193731667/1356193918453#a9>
- OMAFRA: Animal health update: Avian influenza (February 17, 2023): <https://www.ontario.ca/document/animal-health-updates-and-veterinary-advisories/avian-influenza-february-17-2023>
- Prevent the Spread of Avian Influenza in Wild Birds: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-game-bird-hunting/avian-influenza-wild-birds/prevent-spread-poster.html>
- Ministry of Health Avian Influenza – Personal Protective Equipment Recommendations: [Personal Protective Equipment for Workers and Employers working with or Around Poultry, Wild Birds, and Other Susceptible Animal Species](#)

For more information on bird flu, contact **York Region Health Connection** at 1-800-361-5653

TTY: 1-866-512-6228 or email health.inspectors@york.ca