

PRESS RELEASE

From: Town of Rochester, Board of Health
Regarding: Avian Flu, Commonly Known as Bird Flu
Date: January 22, 2025

H5N1 or “Bird Flu” is a naturally occurring virus among wild aquatic birds, also known as wild waterfowl, throughout the world and can infect domestic poultry like chickens, ducks, and turkeys. Infected birds may or may not become sick but can infect other fowl. The virus is shed through saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. It is often present in natural water sources frequented by wild waterfowl. Domestic poultry may become infected with H5N1 when natural water sources are frequented, and when in contact with wild waterfowl.

Protective actions include:

- Avoiding contact with suspected sick wild waterfowl and domestic poultry and observe them only from a distance.
- Keep backyard domestic poultry away from wild waterfowl and natural water sources frequented by wild waterfowl.
- Implement biosecurity plans.

If you find a dead bird (wild waterfowl or domestic poultry), avoid contact. To report dead wild waterfowl or domestic poultry, call 617-626-1795 or online at mass.gov/reportbirds. Other types of birds, like songbirds and backyard birds, are rarely affected and should only be reported if there are 10 or more dead birds.

Symptoms in wild waterfowl and domestic poultry include sudden death without clinical signs, incoordination, diarrhea, lack of energy or appetite, decreased egg production, purple discoloration of wattles, comb and legs, nasal discharge, coughing, and sneezing.

It is safe to eat properly handled and cooked poultry in the United States. There are recommendations regarding other products from other animals that may be infected with H5N1 available online at [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). H5N1 can be found in products such as raw milk. Pasteurized milk is safe to consume.

More information can be found online at [cdc.gov/flu/avianflu](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu), [mass.gov/info-details/avian-influenza](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/avian-influenza), [mass.gov/orgs/Massachusetts-department-of-agricultural-resources](https://www.mass.gov/orgs/Massachusetts-department-of-agricultural-resources).