



What You Should Know About Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

As of **March 31, 2008** the H5N1 strain of Avian Influenza has not been detected in North America.
Number of Samples tested in 2007: Nevada - 1,147; United States - 95,810
--- There is No Current Pandemic Influenza Outbreak ---

What is Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, specifically Asian H₅N₁?

- H5N1 refers to the antigens (a substance that initiates the production of an antibody - the blood proteins that fight infection and contribute to immunity) that identify it as being different from other avian influenza viruses.
- Influenza viruses are constantly changing. Some forms can jump from birds to mammals and on to humans.
- The strain causing concern is *highly pathogenic* to some birds and is called **Asian H₅N₁**.

Should one be concerned about contracting avian influenza?

- Avian influenza exists naturally within populations of wild birds and has been called “fowl pest” and “fowl plague” for the particularly decimating impacts that occur when these naturally occurring strains become virulent. There are many strains of avian influenza that occur in wild and domestic bird populations and in many of these do not cause illness for the birds they inhabit. Avian influenza is frequent within waterfowl and shorebirds, and to a lesser extent – gulls.
- Few bird viruses are able to infect humans.
- HPAI is primarily an animal disease and unless people come into direct, sustained contact with infected birds, it is unlikely they will contract the disease. The **Asian H₅N₁** virus has demonstrated the ability to infect and produce a fatal illness in humans living under those circumstances. If the virus evolves the capacity for sustained human-to-human transmission, it could spread quickly around the world.

I hunt waterfowl; can I get the disease from wild birds?

- Some birds that migrate to North America do breed in the Arctic Circle in Siberia, but the most numerous of these aren't known to occur in close proximity to where outbreaks in Asian wild birds have been documented.
- Though theoretically possible, there is little evidence that migratory birds in Asia have had a significant role in the spread of **Asian H₅N₁** in Eurasia, nor is it clear what role these birds have on a larger, global scale.
- It has yet to be determined that **Asian H₅N₁** persists within migrating waterfowl or shorebirds or whether birds acquiring **Asian H₅N₁** in Asia could present a lingering long-distance threat on that continent.
- Scientists have concerns that **Asian H₅N₁** could be transported to North America through illegal traffic in birds.
- One should take common sense precautions at all times when handling wild game of any kind.



Nevada Duck Stamp by Ken Michaelsen

Hunter's Precautions

- ✓ Do not handle obviously sick birds or birds found dead.
- ✓ Keep your game birds cool, clean and dry.
- ✓ Do not eat, drink or smoke while cleaning you birds.
- ✓ Wear rubber gloves while cleaning your game.
- ✓ Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol wipes after dressing birds.
- ✓ Clean all tools and surfaces immediately afterward; use hot soapy water, then disinfect with a 10% chlorine bleach solution.
- ✓ Cook game meat thoroughly (155-165°F) to kill disease organisms and parasites.

The above compliments of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game

Other sources of information about HPAI:

United States Fish & Wildlife Service:

www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/issues/AvianFlu/WBAvianFlu.htm

National Centers for Disease Control:

www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm

National HPAI Early Detection Data System:

www.wildlifedisease.nbi.gov/ai/

US Geologic Survey - National Wildlife Health Center:

www.nwhc.usgs.gov

US Department of Health & Human Services

www.hhs.gov/pandemicflu/plano or www.pandemicflu.gov

Nevada State Health Division

<http://health2k.state.nv.us>

US Department of Agriculture – Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service

www.aphis.usda.gov