



PROVIDER HEALTH ADVISORY

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First Cases of Avian Influenza in SLO County: Guidance for Veterinarians

Background

In February 2022, the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) A (H5N1) virus was detected in U.S. wild birds and commercial and domestic poultry. HPAI quickly became widespread across the United States and has since been detected in 46 states, including California. In California, more than 30 counties have detected HPAI in wild birds and/or domestic or commercial poultry flocks.

The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Department was notified by the California Department of Public Health of the County's first confirmed cases of avian influenza: two wild geese located in central San Luis Obispo County. It is likely we will see more avian influenza detected, as this virus spreads easily among birds. Risk of animal-to-human transmission remains low, with only one documented case in the United States of this outbreak.

While most veterinarians in SLO County do not provide avian care, this notice is precautionary in the event of inadvertent contact with an ill or deceased avian patient, and to help answer questions from the public.

Prevention

Flu vaccines are recommended for any individual who may be exposed to avian influenza. Vaccination should take place two weeks prior to exposure to be considered protective. While seasonal flu vaccination might not prevent infection, it can reduce the risk of severe disease as well as the risk of co-infection with human and bird flu viruses.

Infected, well-appearing, sick or dead birds can shed the virus in their saliva, mucus and feces. Human infections remain rare but have occurred most often after unprotected contact with an infected bird or a surface contaminated with the virus.

Veterinary clinicians who see an avian patient should don proper personal protective equipment, including gloves, a NIOSH-approved respirator (e.g., N95), and properly fitted, unvented or indirectly vented safety goggles. Hand washing with soap and water is required after handling birds. Changing clothes in a clean space after handling wild birds is also highly recommended. Additional PPE and avian influenza information can be found on the CDC's website by visiting <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/h5/worker-protection-ppe.htm>

Post-exposure

Because infectious influenza can remain stable on surfaces for up to two weeks, proper disinfectant should be used on any surfaces touched by avian patients. Recommended

disinfectants can be found by visiting the [Environmental Protection Agency's list of disinfectants that have label claims against Influenza A virus](#).

Any individual exposed to an animal with confirmed avian influenza should contact the County's Public Health Department immediately by calling 805-781-5500. The Public Health Department may provide exposure notification and symptom monitoring until 10 days after last exposure.

After exposure to any sick bird, individuals should self-monitor for 10 days after last contact and contact their health care provider immediately if they experience any symptoms. Most signs and symptoms overlap with other respiratory illnesses including cough, sore throat, conjunctivitis, fever, runny or stuffy nose, headaches, muscle or body aches, and diarrhea.

To report issues regarding avian influenza:

If you encounter any dead wild birds who may have died of avian influenza, notify the **California Department of Fish and Wildlife** by calling **916-358-2790**.

If you receive inquiries from individuals experiencing sudden or unexplained death of poultry, they can make a report with the **California Department of Food & Agriculture** by calling **559-685-3500** (Tulare District office).

Any person who has had close contact with sick or dead birds and experiences avian influenza symptoms within 10 days of the exposure should notify the **San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department** as soon as possible by calling **805-781-5500** (M-F, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.) or 805-781-4553 (weekends and after hours).

For more information:

For more information about avian influenza, please visit:
www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/avian-flu-summary.htm