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## Avian Influenza: Know the Facts!



### What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza (AI) is a viral infection that occurs naturally in wild birds, especially waterfowl, gulls and shorebirds. Avian influenza viruses vary widely in their ability to cause disease (termed pathogenicity) and spread among birds.

### Why all the recent concern about AI?

The emergence of an Asian strain of highly pathogenic H5N1 (HP-H5N1) virus in 1996 and subsequent spread of the virus in Asia, Africa, and Europe has killed thousands of wild birds and millions of domestic poultry. In 1997, the first occurrence of HP-H5N1 in humans was reported in Hong Kong and to-date has infected at least 200 people in Eurasia and Africa, resulting in over 100 deaths. Although movements of domestic poultry or contaminated poultry products, both legally and illegally, are believed to be the major driving force in the spread of HP-H5N1, migratory birds are thought to be a contributing factor. Further, although the current form of HP-H5N1 is poorly transmissible from poultry to humans, and human-to-human transmission has been documented only in rare situations, the virus' mutation and adaptation in humans could result in the emergence of the next pandemic influenza.

### Do we expect HP-H5N1 to show up in the United States?

Government officials, scientists, and the public are concerned that an introduction of HP-H5N1 into North America could cause sickness and mortality in wild bird populations and potentially devastate this country's poultry industry.

### Is wild bird surveillance planned in Minnesota?

In 2006, Minnesota DNR, in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture, will sample approximately 2,000 wild birds statewide for HP-H5N1. A small portion of these samples will be collected during the summer months through programs that band wild ducks and Canadian geese, with the vast majority of samples being collected from hunter-harvested birds this fall.

### What should waterfowl hunters know?

Although the risk of avian influenza from wild birds to hunters and wildlife enthusiasts is minimal, the DNR recommends the following:

- Do not handle or butcher birds that are obviously sick or are found dead.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while cleaning animals.
- Wear rubber gloves and washable clothing when cleaning game.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water or disinfectant wipes immediately after handling game.
- Wash tools and working surfaces with soap and water, then disinfect with a 10% solution of chlorine bleach.
- Cook all meat thoroughly: birds should reach an internal temperature of 165° F as measured by a meat thermometer.

### Where I can learn more about AI?

For more information on avian influenza, visit the following websites:

Minnesota DNR: [www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us)

MN AI info: [www.birdflu.state.mn.us](http://www.birdflu.state.mn.us)

Federal AI info: [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)