

ASIAN BIRD FLU

Birds have their own flu (influenza) viruses, known as bird flu or avian influenza. These viruses may or may not cause outbreaks in birds. Occasionally, these viruses can also infect humans, and sometimes cause an outbreak or, very rarely, a pandemic.

The Asian Bird Flu virus that is currently causing outbreaks in birds around the world is also referred to as avian influenza A (H5N1). The Asian Bird Flu is just one of many bird flu viruses.

- Bird flu viruses are very common throughout the world and are generally of little concern to humans.
- Outbreaks of many different kinds of bird flu occur commonly among poultry in the United States.
- Bird flu viruses occur naturally among birds. Wild birds worldwide carry the viruses, but usually do not get sick from them. However, some bird flu strains are very contagious among birds, and can be deadly to different types of birds, including chickens, ducks, and turkeys. The Asian Bird Flu is one of these viruses, which is deadly to both domesticated and wild birds.

Bird Flu viruses generally do not affect people. The Asian Bird Flu has caused rare illnesses in humans, but has not caused human outbreaks and is not currently causing a pandemic.

- Human illnesses and deaths connected to Asian Bird Flu have been rare.
- Human cases overseas are in people who have close contact with infected sick or dead birds.
- Public health officials worldwide are closely watching for any signs that would indicate if or when the Asian Bird Flu virus has changed into a form that could be spread from person-to-person.
- To date, the Asian Bird Flu has not been found in the United States. Although it is likely that the Asian Bird Flu virus will be detected in birds in the United States in the future, there will be a low risk for large outbreaks in domesticated birds, as U.S. commercial poultry flocks are more safe and secure from outbreaks than in most parts of the world.
- If the Asian Bird Flu is found in Arizona or other parts of the U.S., there will be a very low risk to the public's health, as the Asian Bird Flu is not a human disease, and does not spread readily between humans.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is it safe to cook and eat chicken, other poultry and eggs?

Yes. It is safe to eat poultry and eggs. There is no evidence that humans can become infected with Asian Bird Flu by eating properly cooked poultry and eggs. It is highly unlikely that poultry with Asian Bird Flu would enter the United States food supply. And, even if it did, washing utensils and cooking poultry to at least 165° F kills the virus.

Is it safe to hunt, field dress and eat wild game birds?

Yes. It is still safe to hunt and eat game birds. However, hunters are always encouraged to wear gloves when skinning and preparing any game meat (this includes birds and mammals), to wash hands and equipment with soap and water after handling animals, and to cook meat thoroughly before serving it.

I have a neighbor who feeds and attracts lots of birds/pigeons. Am I at increased risk for Asian Bird Flu?

No. The Asian Bird Flu has not been found in Arizona or anywhere in the United States. Almost all human cases of Asian Bird Flu have been in Asia and have involved humans who are in very close contact with birds. There is no evidence to suggest that feeding birds will put humans at risk for Asian Bird Flu.

Can the health department stop people from feeding birds?

There are no state public health laws that prohibit people from feeding birds. Also, in most areas there are no local/city ordinances that prevent people from feeding birds. Some home owner's associations have adopted rules that prohibit excessive bird feeding. Consult your neighborhood home owner's association (if one exists). If bird feeding is permissible, it is still important to be considerate to your neighbors.

I have a dead bird in my yard. Can I have it tested for Asian Bird Flu?

No. Health officials are not accepting and testing dead birds for Asian Bird Flu. State and federal departments of agriculture are testing poultry with illness for evidence of infection with Asian bird flu and other poultry diseases. State and federal wildlife officials are testing wild waterfowl, such as wild ducks and geese, and shorebirds, such as plovers and sandpipers, for the Asian bird flu in only select areas of the state. Wildlife officials are NOT accepting backyard dead wild birds for testing for bird flu virus.

During the mosquito season (March through October), county public health officials in Arizona accept fresh, dead wild birds* for West Nile virus testing. Pigeons, doves, and baby birds are not tested.

**Dead birds must be fresh. Contact your County Environmental Health Office to report/submit dead wild birds for West Nile virus testing.*

Can I get the Asian Bird Flu from pigeon droppings?

No. The Asian Bird Flu has not been found in the United States. The virus would not likely survive prolonged exposure to Arizona's dry conditions, especially in the summer.

My pet dog/cat brought a dead bird into my house. Can my pet dog or cat get sick from Asian Bird Flu?

Dogs and cats are generally considered to be resistant to most kinds of bird flu. However, cases of Asian Bird Flu have been reported among some cats in Asia. Since the Asian Bird Flu has not been identified in the United States or Arizona, dogs and cats which catch wild birds are not at risk for this disease. If your pet is ill, consult your veterinarian for proper diagnosis and treatment. More information about protecting your pets is under [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

I am feeling sick. Can I be tested for Asian Bird Flu?

If you are sick, consult your doctor. Testing is available for flu viruses which typically occur during the cold and flu season. At this time, testing for Asian Bird Flu would not be appropriate- except in cases where the patient had traveled to an area of the world affected by Asian Bird Flu and had close contact with infected birds or humans.

Are my pet birds at risk for the Asian Bird Flu?

There is no Asian Bird Flu in the United States. In order to protect your pet birds from other bird diseases, keep your birds isolated from wild birds. Also, keep newly acquired or ill birds away from other birds for 30 days.

What should I do to protect my workers that have contact with poultry?

[Tried and true measures to protect workers.](#)

What if I want more information?

The United State Department of Agriculture has created a [web page](#) devoted to Asian Bird Flu. To find out what the Arizona Department of Agriculture is doing to protect poultry in Arizona, visit their [webpage](#).

How are bird flu, pandemic flu, and seasonal flu different?

[Bird flu](#) is caused by bird flu viruses, which occur naturally among birds.

[Pandemic flu](#) is a global human outbreak, or pandemic, of serious flu illness that spreads easily from person to person and is caused by a new flu virus. Currently there is no pandemic flu anywhere in the world.

[Seasonal flu](#) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by human flu viruses which occur every year during October through April during the United State's "Flu Season."