ANIMAL HEALTH ALERT
County of Los Angeles Public Health
Veterinary Public Health | (213) 288-7060 | vet@ph.lacounty.gov | http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/

Animal Health Alert: Season's First H5 Bird Flu Detection in Wild Birds in Los Angeles County: Guidance and Reporting Forms

12.05.2025

Key Points:

- H5 bird flu was detected for the first time this season in wild birds in Los Angeles County.
- Four gulls and one egret tested positive for H5 bird flu in November 2025.
- Report suspected cases of H5 bird flu to Veterinary Public Health.
- Exercise precautions when working with birds and other animals suspected to be infected (e.g. cats and wild mammals).
- Guidance for animal control/shelter/veterinary staff and the public is available.

Dear Veterinary Colleagues:

H5 bird flu (also referred to as highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1) has again been detected in five wild birds collected in November 2025 in Los Angeles County (see table below). Prior to this, the last wild bird to test positive for H5 bird flu in Los Angeles County was in February 2025. The wild birds initially tested PCR-positive for influenza A at the Los Angeles County Public Health Laboratory (PHL) and were recently confirmed positive for H5 bird flu by the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL).

Since the current outbreak was first detected in wild birds in North America in December 2021, H5 bird flu appears to have established a seasonal pattern, reemerging in the fall during wild bird migrations. To align with this pattern, we will report bird flu cases from October to September, instead of by calendar year. From September 2022 through

September 2025, H5 bird flu was detected in 61 wild birds in Los Angeles County. Additionally, one live poultry sales premises in Los Angeles County had a positive test on a bird in August 2025.

H5 bird flu in Los Angeles County, October 2025-September 2026 season

Date reported	Species	Location	Clinical signs
11/09/2025	Great Egret	Van Nuys	Lying on side, unable to hold head up, emaciated
11/10/2025	California Gull	Manhattan Beach	Ataxia, head tremors, seizures
11/13/2025	Western Gull	Malibu	Dyspnea
11/14/2025	California Gull	San Pedro	Lethargy, mild ataxia
11/21/2025	Western Gull	Palos Verdes	Lethargy, seizure

Several people were known to have direct contact with these infected birds. Their health was monitored for 10 days post-exposure, all remained healthy, and none required testing.

Currently, the risk of transmission of H5 bird flu to humans is low, but infections in people have occurred in the United States and elsewhere. Guidance for shelters and veterinary clinics on precautions when handling animals that may be infected with H5 bird flu is available on the Veterinary Public Health website. General recommendations include:

- Avoid unprotected direct physical contact with sick birds, carcasses, bird feces or litter, and surfaces or water that might be contaminated with bird feces (buckets, kennels, cages, bowls).
- If you must have contact with any of these, wear recommended personal protective equipment (PPE). This includes: respirator (e.g. N-95), disposable gloves, properly fitted unvented or indirectly vented safety goggles, boots or boot covers, disposable fluid-resistant gown or coveralls, and disposable head cover or hair cover. Put on and take off PPE in separate clean areas.
- Clean reusable PPE (e.g., rubber boots) until visible dirt is removed and then disinfect with an EPA-approved disinfectant with label claims against Influenza A viruses according to manufacturer instructions.
- Self-monitor for symptoms of illness for 10 days after the last exposure to potentially infected birds or contaminated materials, even if contact was minimal and PPE was worn.

- Report exposure to potentially infected birds or contaminated materials to VPH by completing this form and emailing to vet@ph.lacounty.gov or by calling 213-288-7060.

Residents should take down bird feeders and communal bird baths to reduce the risk of the virus spreading from bird-to-bird. They should also keep pets away from sick and dead birds and prevent wild birds from getting into, or defecating down into areas holding pet birds or poultry. Freshly dead wild birds, especially larger ones such as geese, ducks, shorebirds (e.g. gulls), and birds of prey (e.g. hawks, owls, turkey vultures) should be reported to your local animal control agency for potential collection and testing.

The VPH H5 bird flu site has extensive information, including flyers for the public on how to protect themselves and their backyard flocks from HPAI, as well as infographics for social media posting. **VPH encourages you to print and share these materials in your practice.**

Please report sick or dead backyard poultry or other domestic birds suspected of having H5 bird flu to VPH using the H5 bird flu-specific reporting form. The completed form can be emailed to vet@ph.lacounty.gov, and you are always welcome to call VPH at 213-288-7060 (Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm).

As always, thank you for the work you do keeping animals and humans in Los Angeles County healthy.

Flyers referenced above:

- HPAI Guidance for Animal Control, Shelter, and Veterinary Facilities in Los Angeles County
- H5 Bird Flu FAQ **(please post this at your facility for members of the public to see)**
    - Also available in: Spanish, Thai, Tagalog, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean

Additional resources:

- Detections of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Wild Birds – United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS)
- Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Information Sheet – California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
- Avian Influenza Updates – California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)

- H5 Bird Flu: Current Situation – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- H5 Bird Flu in Animals – Los Angeles County Veterinary Public Health (VPH)

H5 bird flu survey for people who handle animals
We are seeking input from people who regularly have close contact with animals in our H5 Bird Flu Survey. Your insights will help us better identify ways to strengthen protection for people who work closely with animals.

The survey takes about **30 minutes** to complete. Participation is **voluntary**, and you may leave it at any time. No personally identifying information will be collected, and all data will be stored securely and analyzed in aggregate.
Please click here to take the survey: H5 bird flu survey for people who handle animals

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Please email vet@ph.lacounty.gov if you wish to unsubscribe or need other AHAN-related assistance. To sign up for future Animal Health Alerts or to view previously released AHANs.