

**Animal Health Alert: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 Detected in Wild Birds
in Los Angeles County: Guidance and Reporting Forms
1.24.2024**

Key Points:

- Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 has again been detected in three wild birds in Los Angeles County.
- Report suspected HPAI cases to VPH.
- Exercise precautions if working with birds. Guidance for animal control/shelter/veterinary staff and the public is available.

Dear Veterinary Colleagues:

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 has again been detected this winter in three wild birds in Los Angeles County. The three birds initially tested PCR-positive for influenza A by the LA County Public Health Laboratory (PHL) and were recently confirmed HPAI H5N1 positive by the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL). Previously, a total of 30 birds with HPAI H5N1 were detected in LA County between October 2022 and April 2023.

The recently reported HPAI H5N1-infected birds included:

1. A Canada Goose that was found on a street in Alhambra on 12/20/23 that was weak, shaking and unable to fly.
2. A Western Gull found on 11/27/23 near a lifeguard tower on the beach in El Segundo that was shaking and unable to fly
3. A raven found on 11/25/23 on a driveway of a home in Eagle Rock that had neurologic signs, cloudy eyes, and open mouth breathing.

Several people had direct contact with these birds. The health of these people was monitored for 10 days post-exposure, and none required testing.

Currently, the risk of transmission of HPAI H5N1 to humans is considered low. However, there is evidence that H5N1 may infect humans in rare instances. VPH has guidance for shelters and veterinary clinics on how to keep animal control/shelter/veterinary staff healthy. VPH makes the following recommendations, which can also be found in the link at the end of the alert:

- 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).
- Wear recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) when in direct contact with birds, carcasses, or equipment that may be contaminated with bird feces.

- Recommended PPE 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.
- Reusable PPE (e.g., rubber boots) should be cleaned until visible dirt is removed, and then disinfected with an EPA-approved [disinfectant](#) that has label claims against Influenza A viruses according to manufacturer instructions.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose, and mouth after touching any contaminated material while wearing PPE.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, or use the bathroom while wearing PPE.
- Wash hands well with soap and water after removing PPE or use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not immediately available.
- Shower at the end of the work shift and leave all contaminated clothing and equipment at work. Never wear contaminated clothing or equipment outside of the work area.
- 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 birds, especially larger ones like geese, ducks, and shorebirds, should be reported to your local animal control agency for potential collection and testing.

VPH has a [webpage](#) with extensive information about HPAI H5N1, including a flyer with information for the public on how to protect birds and themselves from HPAI, as well as infographics for social media posting. VPH encourages you to print these out and share these materials in your practice.

Additionally, VPH has an HPAI-specific reporting form to help us track reported cases. Please use [this form](#) when reporting suspect HPAI cases to VPH. The completed form can be emailed to vet@ph.lacounty.gov, and please remember 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.

Links to flyers referenced above:

[HPAI Guidance for Animal Control, Shelter and Veterinary Facilities in Los Angeles County](#)

[HPAI in Los Angeles County](#) (please post this at your facility for members of the public to see)

Additional resources:

[Wild Bird Avian Influenza Surveillance](#) – United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

[2022 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Information Sheet](#) – California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

[Avian Influenza Updates](#) – California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)

[Bird Flu Current Situation Summary](#) – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[Influenza \(Flu\) – Information on Bird Flu](#) – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[Avian Influenza \(AI\) or Bird Flu](#) – Los Angeles County Veterinary Public Health (VPH)

Sincerely,

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