

## Health Advisory to Long-Term Care Facilities regarding Prevention and Mitigation of Novel Influenza A (H5N1) Virus, Illinois, 2025

### Situation

Several counties in northern Illinois have reported die-offs of waterfowl, including ducks and geese, in the past week. In addition, some large commercial poultry flocks in central and southern Illinois have recently tested positive for the H5N1 virus and are in the process of de-population. Residents in Illinois who have been in contact with these birds without appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment) are at high risk of developing the novel influenza A virus due to H5N1. Many long-term care (LTC) facilities are located near retention ponds that attract waterfowl and other birds. For this reason and a general risk for any LTC facility to have droppings from virus-contaminated wild birds, IDPH is providing specific directions for mitigating the spread of H5N1 in LTC facilities.

### Background

Since 2022, many different wild bird species have been reported with HPAI A(H5N1) virus infection, including terrestrial, seabird, shorebird, and migratory species. In the United States, HPAI A(H5N1) virus detections in wild birds have been reported in 50 states or territories, and outbreaks in commercial poultry or backyard bird flocks associated with high mortality have been reported in 48 states since February 2022.

Although human infections with HPAI A(H5N1) virus are rare, having [unprotected exposure](#) to any infected animal or an environment in which infected birds or other infected animals are or have been present increases the risk of infection. Therefore, people with work or recreational exposures to H5N1 virus-infected animals are at increased risk of infection and should follow recommended precautions. Further background and precautions can be found [here](#).

### Recommendations to Long-Term Care Facilities

- Educate staff to be aware of signs/symptoms. Post signage for visitors. Consider restrictions for symptomatic visitors. [Wear a Mask](#), [Respiratory Virus Poster](#)
- Refer to the recent IDPH Health Alert for clinical guidance for residents with suspect influenza due to H5N1:
  - Residents suspected of acute respiratory illness (ARI) due to H5N1 influenza should be tested through the local health department. [Novel influenza A is immediately reportable](#) to the [local health department](#).
- Waterfowl on the property- Facilities should avoid having goose and duck poop tracking into their building. Mitigate via clean entryways. Schedule frequent daily cleanings of the entryways, inside and out. Have residents and visitors avoid walking on littered pathways out of doors.
- Sick or deceased waterfowl on the property- Facilities that frequently have waterfowl and other birds on their property, especially those located on bodies of water, such as ponds, should:
  - Identify personnel responsible for their removal and ensure they are familiar with IDPH recommendations on removal: [Safe Dead Bird Disposal \(Less than 5 Birds\)](#).
  - Instruct other staff, residents, and visitors not to touch sick or dead birds on the property.
- Therapy birds in congregate settings- Care should only be performed by trained staff. Infected birds in backyard flocks, and possibly pet birds, may show one or more of the following signs:
  - Sudden death with no prior signs

- Low energy or appetite
- Purple discoloration or swelling of various body parts
- Reduced egg production or soft-shelled/misshapen eggs
- Nasal discharge, coughing, or sneezing
- Lack of coordination
- Diarrhea

Immediately contact your veterinarian if you notice any of these signs so they can help you determine the best course of action.

Contact your local health department immediately.

### **Additional Resources and References**

[How Infected Backyard Poultry Could Spread Bird Flu to People](#)

[H5N1 Bird Flu How is it Spreading?](#)

[What To Know About Bird Flu](#)

[Clinician Brief: Evaluating and Managing Patients Exposed to Animals or Persons Infected with Novel Influenza A Viruses of Public Health Concern | Bird Flu | CDC](#)

[Interim Guidance for Infection Control Within Healthcare Settings When Caring for Confirmed Cases, Probable Cases, and Cases Under Investigation for Infection with Novel Influenza A Viruses Associated with Severe Disease | Bird Flu | CDC.](#)

[Avian influenza in pets and backyard flocks | American Veterinary Medical Association.](#)

[Viral Respiratory Pathogens Toolkit for Nursing Homes | LTCFs | CDC](#)

**Target Audience:** Long-Term Care Facilities

### **Date Issued**

January 6, 2025