



H5N1 Bird Flu Guidance for Schools and Camps

Date: May 13, 2025

Key Points:

- H5N1 bird flu (also known as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza/HPAI) is a type of influenza virus that is widespread in birds worldwide and has been found in wild birds in New Jersey. H5N1 bird flu has also caused outbreaks in poultry and dairy cattle in the United States. It can sometimes cause disease in people, usually after close contact with infected poultry or dairy cattle.
- While the risk of transmission to the general public is low and there have not been any cases of H5N1 bird flu in people in New Jersey, New Jersey Department of Health would like to remind schools and camps of the precautions that can be taken to minimize potential exposure from wild birds to children or staff.

Wild birds can carry H5N1 bird flu and other germs that can make people sick, even if they appear healthy. Follow these recommendations to help prevent exposures:

- **Remind Children and Staff to Avoid Contact with Wild Birds and Their Habitats**
Although the risk of H5N1 bird flu transmission to the general public remains low, direct contact with infected animals or contaminated surfaces increases the risk. Students and staff should be advised to take the following precautions:
 - Avoid handling sick or dead wild birds or areas heavily contaminated by their droppings.
 - Do not approach, touch or feed ducks, geese, swans, or other waterfowl.
 - Be aware that wild birds can carry bird flu even if they appear healthy.
- **Reporting Sick or Dead Birds**
Sick or dead birds should be reported to New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish and Wildlife, by completing this [Wild Bird Disease Reporting Form](#).
- **Practice Good Hygiene**
While there are no known human HPAI infections due to merely being near wild bird droppings during recreation, it is still advisable to avoid contact. Children and staff that may have been in contact with birds or contaminated environments should be reminded to avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with contaminated hands and do the following:
 - **Wash hands thoroughly:** Children and staff should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water. Adults should help young children wash hands thoroughly when needed. If soap and water is unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, and wash hands with soap and water when available.

- **Change clothing and shoes** if they have been contaminated by droppings or other materials from wild birds.
- **Contact your local health department** if staff have questions about H5N1 bird flu. Local health department contact information can be found at www.localhealth.nj.gov.

Additional Resources

1. NJ H5N1-Bird Flu Webpage
<https://www.nj.gov/H5N1/>
2. CDC Information on Prevention of Avian Influenza A Viruses in People
<https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/prevention/index.html>
3. US Department of Agriculture – H5N1 Influenza
<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/h5n1-hpai>