

New York State Wildlife Health Program (WHP)

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Field Guidance

The Wildlife Health Program is interested in examining specimens from any of the following species:

- Multiple dead or sick ducks or geese
- Any single or multiple dead/sick swans
- Any single or multiple dead/sick gulls
- Any single or multiple dead/sick eagles or peregrine falcons
- Multiple dead or sick shorebirds
- Any single or multiple dead/sick herons/cranes

In larger-scale mortalities please collect at least 6 of the freshest-looking carcasses from each species affected. Place in individual bags to avoid cross contamination. If at all possible, collect all dead birds for disposal to get them off the landscape and make them unavailable to scavengers. Record a count (or estimate) of dead/sick from each species and an estimate of the number of live/seemingly unaffected birds present. Include location data (coordinates) and date of first observation and environmental conditions.

Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) during known HPAI outbreak:

When handling any high-risk species, live or dead, the minimum PPE should be disposable Tyvek coveralls, gloves (latex, nitrile, or rubber), disposable N95 or KN95 mask, goggles or face shield, and rubber boots or waders. The boots or waders and equipment should be cleaned and disinfected on-site with Virkon or 10% bleach solution, so HPAI virus is not transported to another site.

As always, care should be taken not to contaminate your clothing and to position yourself upwind of the carcass while bagging the specimen. Don't drink, eat, or smoke when handling wild birds. Be mindful of handling other objects or touching your face (pens, cell phones) while wearing contaminated gloves. After removing your gloves, wash your hands thoroughly for at least 30 seconds (using soap/water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer) before eating, smoking, using a cell phone, and touching your face, hair, or exposed skin.

If responding to a report of a single dead bird from the lower risk species, minimum PPE should be a mask or face shield and latex/nitrile gloves. The other precautions above still apply.

If you keep backyard poultry or other birds you should change clothing and shoes, shower, and disinfect any equipment used before you handle any live wild birds (banding, netting, etc.). The same precautions should be taken between field work and returning home.

Risk of HPAI infection for humans:

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states that the health risk from this strain of bird flu virus is low, “however some people may have job-related or recreational exposures to birds that put them at higher risk of infection.” Follow the above precautions when handling wild birds, particularly waterfowl, gulls and raptors, to reduce your risk. Consider receiving seasonal influenza vaccines. Monitor your health for any signs of flu-like symptoms within a week of handling wild birds and consult your health care provider if you have any questions.

Further Information:

[CDC Avian Influenza](#)

[Biosafety for Field Work](#)

[USDA Avian Influenza Updates 2022](#)

[USGS HPAI Distribution 2021/2022](#)

[USDA Backyard Poultry and Biosecurity](#)