

## Avian Influenza – Knowing The Facts

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) currently reported that bird feeders are unlikely to significantly contribute to the spread of avian influenza, as the species that frequent feeders are not commonly affected by the virus. However, we should put some common-sense practices into place...

- Always wash your hands with soap and water after handling bird feeders.
- Routinely clean and disinfect bird feeders to maintain a healthy environment.
- Minimize direct contact with bird excrement to reduce potential exposure.
- Avoid feeding wild birds if you have a backyard poultry flock. This prevents wild birds from being attracted to your yard, thereby reducing the chances of your flock becoming infected.

Avian influenza is shed in the saliva, mucus, and feces of infected birds and is transmitted to other birds via ingestion or inhalation. Wild or domestic birds with any of the avian influenza virus types may exhibit decreased egg production; sudden death without clinical signs; swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks; and nasal discharge and lack of coordination.

If you encounter a sick bird, contact a local wildlife rehabilitator with details on its symptoms and location. You may be asked to send a video of the bird's behavior, so a true assessment of any Avian Influenza symptoms can be made. If you encounter multiple sick or dead birds (six or more), particularly waterfowl, shorebirds, crows, gulls, or cranes, call **800-WILDLIFE (945-3543)** to report large mortality events.

### Protecting Yourself and Pets:

Bird flu is generally not a risk to food safety. Poultry, meat, and eggs that are safely handled and cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F are safe to eat. Additionally, pasteurized milk is also safe; however, the avian flu virus has been found in raw milk and this should not be consumed by people or fed to cats. To further protect yourself and your pets:

- If you feel sick after having contact with sick or dead birds, be sure to contact your health care provider.
- Keep pets (including pet birds) away from sick or dead wild birds
- Wear gloves and a mask to handle any sick or dead birds.
- Dispose of carcasses and double bag the carcass.
- Avoid contact with surfaces that have bird feces.
- Throw away your gloves and facemask after use.
- Wash your hands well with soap and warm water.

By staying informed and taking precautions, we can help minimize the impact of avian influenza on Ohio's wildlife and domestic bird populations.