

ALLEGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bird Flu Suspected in Wild Birds Across Michigan

(Allegan County, MI) – The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has reported confirmed cases of bird flu (also known as Avian Influenza or Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza) across Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The Allegan County Health Department (ACHD) is encouraging people who hunt, own, or work with birds, including poultry, to take recommended precautions. Bird flu is not a food safety concern if poultry and eggs are handled and cooked properly.

Bird flu viruses can infect both wild and domestic birds. In Michigan, bird flu has been detected in both backyard flocks and wild birds. So far this year, data provided by DNR states that 300 dead birds have been found to have bird flu in Michigan. Bird flu spreads easily among birds and, while rare, can spread from birds to people. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the general public's health risk associated with bird flu remains low. People who work closely with and handle live birds are most at risk of bird flu, so additional safety precautions are recommended.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) recommends following these simple precautionary steps to protect both animal and human health.

- Prevent contact between domestic and wild birds by bringing domestic birds indoors or fully enclosing their outdoor area.
- Wash hands before and after handling birds as well as when moving between different coops.
- Disinfect boots and other gear when moving between coops.
- Do not share equipment or other supplies between coops or other farms.
- Clean and disinfect equipment and other supplies between uses. If equipment cannot be disinfected, discard it.
- Use well or municipal water as drinking water for birds.
- Keep poultry feed secure to ensure there is no contact between the feed/feed ingredients and wild birds or rodents.

The DNR has also issued a recommendation for the [temporary removal of bird feeders](#) this year to help curtail the spread of bird flu in both wild and domestic birds. If people choose to continue using their bird feeders, please keep this guidance in mind:

- Clean bird feeders with a diluted bleach solution (and rinse well) once per week. Regular cleaning helps protect birds against other infections, including salmonella.
- Clean up the birdseed that has fallen below the feeders to discourage large numbers of birds and other wildlife from congregating in a concentrated area.
- Do not feed wild birds, especially waterfowl, near domestic flocks.

If exposed to an infected bird, individuals should watch for symptoms of influenza for 10 days after their last contact with the bird. Similar to seasonal flu in humans, bird flu can be treated using antiviral drugs. These medications work better the sooner they are given. If you suspect you may be ill, please contact your primary care provider.

Reporting Possible Cases in Birds

For Domestic Birds

Domestic bird owners and caretakers should watch for unusual deaths, a drop in egg production, a significant decrease in water consumption, or an increase in sick birds. If bird flu is suspected in domestic birds, contact MDARD **immediately** at 800-292-3939 (daytime) or 517-373-0440 (after-hours).

For Wild Birds

For unusual or unexplained deaths among wild bird populations (six or more dead wild birds), please report these cases to the DNR by:

- Using the DNR's [Eyes in the Field app](#). Choose the "Diseased Wildlife" option among the selections for "Observation Forms."
- Calling the DNR Wildlife Disease Laboratory at 517-336-5030.

For more information on bird flu, visit MDARD at www.michigan.gov/birdflu. Learn more about ACHD services at www.allegancounty.org/health. Find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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