

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

GOVERNOR
MAURA T. HEALEY

SECRETARY
REBECCA TEPPER

LT. GOVERNOR
KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, January 29, 2025

MEDIA CONTACTS

MassWildlife: Nicole McSweeney, MassWildlife.news@mass.gov

MDAR: Phu Mai, phu.mai@mass.gov

DPH: Kathleen Conti, kathleen.m.conti@mass.gov

**State Officials Provide Updated Guidance on
Suspected Avian Flu Cases Reported Across
Massachusetts**

Recommendations aim to support public health, agriculture, and wildlife amid ongoing monitoring efforts

A virtual media availability will be held today at 11:30 am. To RSVP, contact aisha.revolus@mass.gov

BOSTON – State environmental and health officials are informing the public that Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 virus, which rarely infects humans, is suspected to be the cause of death in cases of both wild and domestic birds in several Massachusetts municipalities. The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife), the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) are advising the public to refrain from handling birds or other animals that are dead or appear sick and report suspected cases.

Since early 2022, Massachusetts has had recurring incidents of HPAI. In January 2025, an outbreak of HPAI was [suspected of causing](#) the death of Canada geese, swans, and other birds in Plymouth. Preliminary positive cases are being reported at other locations across the state. Evidence suggests that HPAI is widespread in Massachusetts and is likely present even in places where there has not been a confirmed positive. State officials are working with partners to test suspected cases and collaborating with municipalities to safely dispose of dead birds.

Both wild and domesticated birds can become infected with HPAI. Raptors, waterfowl, and other aquatic birds are most at risk for infection, although any bird species should be considered susceptible. Birds may be infected with HPAI without showing any signs of illness. Wild mammals, especially those that scavenge on birds, such as foxes, can also become infected.

Report Suspected Cases:

- **Report Wild Birds:** The public should report observations to MassWildlife of sick or deceased birds if 5 or more birds are found at a single location, using this simple form at mass.gov/reportbirds.
- **Report Domestic Birds:** The public should report sick or dead poultry or other domestic birds by calling MDAR's Division of Animal Health at (617) 626-1795 or through mass.gov/reportpoultry.

Humans are rarely infected with avian influenza viruses. Humans that have direct contact with animals infected with HPAI are the most at risk of becoming infected. People with questions about the public health impact of HPAI can visit DPH's Avian Influenza [webpage](#) or call the Division of Epidemiology (available 24/7) at 617-983-6800.

Tips for the Public:

- **Avoid handling birds and other wildlife:** The public should strictly avoid handling wildlife, especially sick or dead birds or other animals.
- **Keep pets safe:** Dogs and other pets should always be leashed and away from wildlife. Cats are highly susceptible to HPAI and may die from an infection. Cat owners in affected areas should keep their pets indoors to prevent exposure to infected wildlife.
- **Hunting:** While eating wild game meat is generally considered safe, licensed hunters can minimize the risk of wildlife diseases by following [best practices](#) when handling and processing game.

Tips for Livestock and Poultry Owners:

Since wild migratory birds are natural carriers for Avian Influenza viruses, including HPAI, preventing wild birds from mixing with or having contact with domestic flocks is essential to disease control and prevention.

- Poultry owners should continue to practice strong biosecurity measures to keep their birds away from wild birds, particularly wild waterfowl, feathers, and droppings.
- Poultry owners with water bodies on their property should take steps to mitigate wild waterfowl from frequenting those areas. Eliminating standing water and preventing domestic birds from having access to ponds, streams, and wetland areas that attract wild waterfowl is critical.
- Avoid unnecessary movement of poultry between locations and be aware of the potential to carry HPAI-contaminated materials onto properties where domestic birds are kept.
- New birds should be completely isolated for at least one month prior to being added to a domestic flock. Birds returning home from fairs or shows should also be isolated from the home flock as if they were new arrivals.
- Limit the number of people that have access to your flock.
- Do not share equipment with other bird owners without thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting between locations.
- For more information about HPAI, please visit MDAR's Avian Influenza [webpage](#).