

Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

2022 Outbreak



Avian influenza (or bird flu) caused by the H5N1 virus commonly infects wild and domestic birds. In rare cases, bird flu can infect workers who touch or work around sick birds, their carcasses, and surfaces contaminated with feathers, feces, bird droppings, and saliva in areas such as live-bird markets, animal disease-control, veterinary clinics, laboratories, domestic or industrial poultry farms and backyard bird coops.

Workers doing site restoration, construction, groundskeeping, landscaping, and maintenance including parks and recreation facilities may also have exposure risk from occasional handling of birds and waste.

Workers: Protect Yourself

- Do not have unprotected direct contact with sick birds, bird carcasses, feathers and droppings. Use tools such as trash tongs, pickers, or mechanical grabbers to avoid contact. If this is not possible, wear disposable exam type gloves and a N95 respirator.
- Do not touch surfaces or water possibly contaminated with bird droppings like ponds, waterers, buckets, pans, or troughs.
- Do not touch eyes, mouth, and nose unless you have washed your hands with soap.
- Do not dry sweep or use compressed air hoses to clean bird debris and dropping from surfaces.
- Wash hands thoroughly using soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- If you see a sick or dead bird(s), tell your employer. Report it to the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

Employers: Protect your workers

- Do a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) assessment of your employees' work area and make sure they are trained in how to use it and dispose of it. You may need to provide some or all of the following recommended PPE:
 - Unvented or indirectly vented safety goggles;
 - Disposable exam weight gloves;
 - Boots or boot covers;
 - Disposable fluid-resistant coveralls;
 - Disposable head cover or hair cover; and
 - NIOSH-approved air-purifying respirators with a particulate filter rating of N95 or higher. These respirators should be worn by workers who have direct contact with infected birds, carcasses, or potentially contaminated materials.
 - When N95 respirators are used, follow written program requirements for medical evaluations, fit-testing, and training per the Respirators rule, Chapter 296-842 WAC.
- Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) training for your workers to ensure they know:
 - When and how to use PPE;
 - How to properly put on, and remove PPE in a separate clean area;
 - How to properly discard disposable PPE;
 - How to maintain and disinfect re-usable PPE, like elastomeric respirators;
 - The limitations of PPE.

Upon request, foreign language support and formats for persons with disabilities are available. Call 1-800-547-8367. TDD users, call 711. L&I is an equal opportunity employer.

PUBLICATION F414-186-000 [11-2022]



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Washington State Department of
Labor & Industries