

# Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)



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.
- 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 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 PPE assessment of your employees' work area to ensure they're using:
  - Unvented or indirectly vented safety goggles;
  - Disposable exam weight gloves;
  - Boots or boot covers;
  - Disposable fluid-resistant coveralls; and
  - Disposable head cover or hair cover.
- Provide 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; and
  - The limitations of PPE.
- Use NIOSH-approved air-purifying respirators with a particulate filter rating of N95 or higher.
  - Create and follow a respiratory protection program.
  - Complete medical evaluations, fit-testing and worker training. For more information, review the Respirators, Chapter 296-842, WAC.

For more information visit [Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-topics/topics/avian-flu](https://lmi.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-topics/topics/avian-flu).

*Upon request, 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.*

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