

# What You Should Know!

**What is Avian (Bird) Flu?** Avian Flu is a disease of wild, domesticated or farm birds. There are many types and most do not cause illness in people. However, type H5N1, can infect people.

**What is Pandemic Flu?** Pandemic Flu is a large scale outbreak of a new flu virus, spreading easily from person to person, causing serious illness or death.

### **Do I have regular flu or bird flu?**

Becoming infected with avian flu in the U.S. is currently nonexistent unless you've had close contact with infected animals or have eaten undercooked poultry in regions afflicted by the virus. You cannot self diagnose if you have bird flu or the regular flu. Present information indicates symptoms are similar. The only sure way is by medical testing.

**What if I see a dead bird?** If the bird is a blue jay, crow, eagle, vulture, owl, or hawk; contact the Columbia County West Nile Virus Coordinator at 570-389-9146 (Mon-Fri, 8 AM - 4:30 PM). In addition, the PA Department of Health, PA Game Commission, and PA Department of Agriculture have established the following guidelines: If 5 or more dead **wild** birds are found (except pigeons), call the Northeast Region PA Game Commission at 570-675-1143/1144, option "0" for the dispatcher (Mon-Fri, 6:30AM—10:30PM and Sun, 12-8 PM). For any dead **domestic or commercial** birds, contact the PA Department of Agriculture at 717-772-2852 (Mon-Fri, 8 AM to 4 PM)

**What about feeding birds?** There is no known risk of infection through cleaning and stocking of bird feeders using recommended safety procedures. These include wearing gloves when cleaning and properly disposing of the droppings in a sealable container and throwing them away.

**Should I handle a dead bird?** As a rule, do not handle dead birds. However, if you need to dispose of one; **without touching the bird**, use a sealable plastic bag to pick it up, seal the bag and place it in another sealed bag and throw it away. Wash hands with warm soapy water immediately.

Hunters should observe precautions when handling game. Wear disposable latex or rubber gloves while handling, cleaning and preparing game. Clean any surfaces that come in contact with the animal.

**Can I become infected with the bird flu by consuming eggs or other poultry products from infected birds?** There is no evidence that anyone has been infected with any bird flu by eating *properly* cooked eggs or other *properly* cooked poultry products derived from infected birds.

**Are my pets safer?** Presently, there is no avian flu virus in the U.S. However, domestic animals including pigs, cats, wild cats, and ferrets can become infected. All infected domestic cats in other countries appear to be the result of eating raw meat from an infected bird. There have been no cases of infection in dogs (this does not mean dogs cannot become infected).

# What You Should Do!

### **Prepare Yourself and Your Family**

Have supplies on hand for your family to be self sufficient for at least three days. These items include but are not limited to: non-perishable food, potable water, first-aid kits, flashlights, battery operated radio, extra batteries, personal care items and prescriptions medicines.

• Practice good hygiene: When coughing or sneezing, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands; wash hands thoroughly; keep common areas clean.

• Keep yourself healthy—eat a balanced diet, get plenty of rest, and exercise.

• Stay home from work or school when sick.

• Get a flu shot, especially if you're high risk. (if you're unsure, contact your doctor).

• Stay informed about things you can do. (see back panel for additional sources).

### **Prepare Food Properly**

• Wash hands 10-15 seconds with soap and warm water before and after handling food.

• Prevent contamination by keeping raw meat, poultry, and fish juices away from other foods.

• After cutting raw meats, wash cutting board, knife and counter tops with hot, soapy water.

• Clean cutting board with a solution of one teaspoon chlorine bleach in one quart of water.

• Use a thermometer to ensure all poultry has reached a safe internal temperature of 165°F to kill germs that might be present.

### **Be a Neighbor and Volunteer**

• Help your neighbors, especially those who live alone or have health problems.

• Become a volunteer with your Municipal or County Emergency Management Agency.

### **Protect Your Pet**

• Give your pet food designed for his or her stage of life. Don't feed your pet raw or undercooked meats or non-pasteurized milk. Microwaving may not kill the germs.

• Prevent your pet from eating stool.

• Provide plenty of clean, fresh water. Don't let your animal drink from the toilet.

• Keep your pet away from dead animals and trash. Consider placing two bells on your cat to warn prey when outdoors.

• New animals should see a vet immediately and yearly thereafter to include vaccinations and feces check. Cats should be checked for Feline Leukemia and Immunodeficiency Virus.

• Bath, brush, and groom your animal to keep their skin and coat healthy. Keep toenails clipped. Keep bedding clean.

• Use quality flea and tick control.