

Avian Influenza Public Fact Sheet

What is Avian influenza?

Avian influenza is a rapidly spreading viral disease that mainly infects birds.

Is it contagious?

- Yes, it is contagious
- Although rare, humans and other mammals can be vulnerable to the disease.
- The disease may spread by direct contact with infected birds or objects contaminated by them.
- Birds are the most susceptible animal.
- The disease exists naturally in wild birds.
- Person-to-person spread is extremely rare.

How is avian influenza treated?

- In birds, there is no known treatment.
- Antiviral medications may be effective for human cases.
- Although there are vaccines available for poultry, there is not a vaccine that covers all 15 strains of the disease. Therefore, since there is no way to determine which strain will infect a flock, vaccines are generally not practical to prevent infection in birds.

Are there public health risks?

- Although rare, humans and other mammals can be vulnerable to the disease.
- Most human cases have occurred in people with close contact to infected birds or their environment.
- If you have had contact with infected birds or are showing symptoms, contact your physician immediately.
- There have been no reported cases due to consumption of fully-cooked meat.