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Munarahiliqiyikkut Inuuhiriknirmullu  
Department of Health and Social Services  
Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

# Fact Sheet:

## Bird (Avian) Flu and Human Health

### **What is Bird Flu?**

Bird flu is a disease caused by influenza viruses carried and spread among birds. There are many types of Bird Flu. Most cause few, if any, signs of illness in birds. The 'H5N1 high pathogenic' type – the one in the news -- is different because it makes birds very sick and often kills them. The government is checking geese and other migrating birds in Nunavut for the H5N1 type because there is a risk that infected wild birds from Africa or Europe could arrive here.

### **Can humans get Bird Flu?**

The risk is very low because humans do not easily get infected by Bird Flu viruses. Humans can get Bird Flu by handling or butchering infected birds or coming into contact with their feces (poop). Usually this involves chickens or other birds raised for people to eat.

### **Are Nunavut hunters at risk from Bird Flu?**

Hunters are not at risk right now of being infected by the H5N1 type of Bird Flu because it has not been found in Nunavut birds. But hunters should always use good hygiene and common sense when handling or butchering wild birds. Birds can have diseases other than Bird Flu which might infect humans, like salmonella.

### **Are people who eat country food at risk from Bird Flu?**

Eating country food is important for good health. Humans cannot catch Bird Flu from eating *cooked* bird products (meat and eggs). Cooking kills all viruses.

### **What can Nunavummiut do to avoid catching Bird Flu?**

- Do not touch or eat sick wild birds and animals.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after collecting eggs or cleaning game.
- Wash all knives, equipment and surfaces that come into contact with the harvested bird with soap or a disinfecting solution after use.

- Cook wild bird meat until all juices are clear and the meat is not pink in any parts.
- Cook wild bird eggs until the yolk is not runny.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling birds and animals – you don't want to transmit any viruses from your hands to your mouth or eyes.
- Try to wear rubber or disposable latex gloves while handling and cleaning game or when collecting eggs. You should wash the heavy rubber gloves thoroughly after use. Turn the disposable gloves inside out and put them carefully in the trash.

#### **How can my Health Centre help?**

- You can ask for free latex gloves so you can safely handle birds or eggs you harvest.
- You can ask for a flu shot. Your risk of catching the human flu is a lot higher than your risk of catching the Bird Flu.

#### **How can my Conservation Officer help?**

- You should report any dead birds you spot on the land to your Conservation Officer right away.
- You can ask for more information about how Bird Flu affects animals.

For more information about Bird Flu, visit [www.influenza.gc.ca](http://www.influenza.gc.ca)

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