

Worried About H7N8 Bird Flu in Indiana? What You Need to Know

Background

Avian influenza ('bird flu') outbreaks with a virus called H7N8 were reported in poultry in Dubois County, Indiana. Bird flu' viruses occur naturally among wild aquatic birds worldwide and can infect domestic poultry and other bird and animal species. Wild aquatic birds can be infected with bird flu viruses in their intestines and respiratory tract, but usually do not get sick. However, bird flu viruses are very contagious among birds and some of these viruses can sicken and even kill certain domesticated bird species including chickens, ducks, and turkeys. Some outbreaks of bird flu in poultry cause the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), through cooperative industry, state and federal efforts, to implement plans and procedures to contain and stop the outbreak. The USDA took these actions in Indiana because of the threat these outbreaks pose to the poultry industry and to ensure any additional bird flu outbreaks are identified and controlled quickly.

Bird Flu & People

[Human infection with bird flu viruses is rare \(http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/avian-in-humans.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/avian-in-humans.htm), but can occur. Most often, human infections with bird flu viruses have occurred after unprotected close contact with infected birds or the excretions/secretions of infected birds (e.g., droppings, oral fluids). Infected birds shed virus in their saliva, mucous and feces. Human infections with bird flu viruses can happen when enough virus gets into a person's eyes, nose or mouth, or is inhaled. This can happen when virus is in the air (in droplets or possibly dust) and a person breathes it in, or when a person touches something that has virus on it then touches their mouth, eyes or nose. Human infection with bird flu viruses has not occurred from eating properly cooked poultry or poultry products. Human infections with bird flu viruses can usually be treated with the same prescription drugs that are used to treat human seasonal flu viruses, called "antiviral drugs."

At this time no human infections with H7N8 bird flu viruses have ever been reported worldwide; however, [other avian influenza H7 viruses have infected people \(http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/influenza-a-virus-subtypes.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/influenza-a-virus-subtypes.htm) sporadically. H7 bird flu virus infections in people have been associated with a [wide range of illness \(http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/avian-in-humans.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/avian-in-humans.htm) from conjunctivitis only, to influenza-like illness, to severe respiratory illness. As with seasonal flu, some people are at [high risk \(http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm) of serious illness from bird flu infections,

including pregnant women, people with weakened immune systems and people 65 and older. CDC has [guidance \(http://www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/treatment.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/treatment.htm) for high risk people who get flu-like symptoms resulting from either seasonal flu or bird flu infections.

H7N8 in Indiana

At this time, CDC considers the risk to the general public from these H7N8 viruses to be low; however, because other avian influenza H7 viruses have infected people, it is possible that human infections with these viruses could occur. Risk is dependent on exposure. People with no contact with infected poultry or contaminated environments are considered at very low to no risk of infection. People with close or prolonged unprotected contact with infected birds or contaminated environments are considered at greater (though probably still low) risk of infection.

The [Indiana State Department of Health \(http://www.in.gov/isdh/26902.htm\)](http://www.in.gov/isdh/26902.htm) is implementing its bird flu public health monitoring plan (which includes monitoring the health of people responding to the outbreaks and other people exposed to infected birds, including for example, flock caretakers). This is being done to quickly identify possible human infections with these viruses and make sure anyone who is infected gets prompt medical evaluation and treatment if needed, and also to reduce opportunities for spread.

The Department of Health is monitoring people with bird flu outbreak exposures for signs and symptoms including: fever (temperature of 100°F [37.8°C] or greater) or feeling feverish, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, fatigue, headaches, eye redness (or conjunctivitis), and difficulty breathing. Other possible symptoms are diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and seizures. Many of these symptoms overlap with the symptoms of other human respiratory viruses, including seasonal flu. It is flu season in the U.S. right now and human seasonal influenza viruses are circulating in Indiana at this time.

Advice for People Near H7N8-Affected Facilities:

- People with no contact with infected poultry or contaminated environments are considered to be at very low to no risk of bird flu infection.
- But if you were **near** an H7N8-affected facility and are concerned about a possible exposure, watch your health daily for the next 10 days for fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, eye redness (or conjunctivitis) or difficulty breathing.

- If you develop any of the symptoms listed above, you most likely have a regular human respiratory virus and not bird flu, but follow up to be on the safe side.
- Call your state/local health department if you develop any of these illness signs or symptoms during the next 10 days. Your health department will help you determine what to do next.
- If you **did** have contact with infected birds or contaminated environments, and develop flu-like symptoms, you should call your health department immediately.

Protective Actions You Can Take:

- Avoid wild birds and observe them only from a distance;
- Avoid contact with domestic birds (poultry) that appear ill or have died.
- Avoid contact with surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from wild or domestic birds.

More information about bird flu is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/index.htm>