



Chaffee County Public Health

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Chaffee County Public Health Confirms Case of H5N1 Avian Influenza in Local Waterfowls

Chaffee County, CO - Chaffee County Public Health (CCPH) has been notified by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) of a confirmed case of H5N1 (but additional presumed cases), also known as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), in local waterfowl in Salida. A group of approximately 20 dead or sick ducks and geese was discovered near Sands Lake in Salida, and testing has confirmed they were likely all infected with the virus.

Due to the large amounts of waterfowl throughout Chaffee County, CCPH wants to ensure the public is informed. While the risk to humans remains low, residents are advised to avoid direct contact with wild birds and only observe them from a distance. Although the risk of transmission to domestic cats and dogs is rare, they could be infected with avian flu if they go outside and eat or are exposed to sick or dead birds or an environment that is contaminated with infected bird feces. While reports of dead infected birds have been circulating around Colorado for over a year, these are the first confirmed cases of H5N1 in Chaffee County that have been reported to CCPH.

Sean Shephard, Area Wildlife Manager with CPW, asks that the public report any additional sightings of dead or sick waterfowl to their office so appropriate actions can be taken. The phone number to call is 719-530-5520.

If you suspect that you have been exposed to contaminated materials or sick birds, monitor yourself for 10 days following exposure and contact your health care provider and health department if you experience any symptoms of avian flu, especially those respiratory in nature. Symptoms include but are not limited to:

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever or feeling feverish
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches, body aches or headache
- Fatigue

If you suspect that your pet has been exposed to HPAI, monitor for symptoms such as fever, lethargy, loss of appetite, eye or nasal discharge, difficulty breathing, or neurologic signs, and seek veterinary care if these symptoms occur.

There is treatment available for people who get sick with avian flu. However, antiviral medication works best when symptoms begin.

“This is not the time to panic about the first sightings of bird flu in Chaffee County. However, our department has been fielding concerns about how to stay safe from it. Avian influenza does not present a food safety risk as long as poultry and eggs are handled and cooked properly to an internal temperature of 165 degrees. At this time, the public should be aware that avian influenza is here in wild birds and to take reasonable precautions,” says Andrea Carlstrom, CCPH Director.