



Office of the Director, DoDDS-Europe
Public Affairs

Fact Sheet

Dead Bird Information: 100th Medical Detachment (Veterinary Services)

Birds die all the time, so it is not unusual to find dead carcasses of birds where you live, work, or play. But during this year's cold and flu season, you may want to pay special attention to how you handle dead birds. The experts' advice – Don't!

Why are birds getting sick?

Pick up any paper and you will see the latest story about where the newest influenza virus is striking birds. Yes, birds get the flu. Avian influenza viruses that naturally occur among birds cause avian flu, or bird flu. This year there is a particularly nasty virus strain, H5N1. It started in Asia, is now in Europe, and is expected to travel on to the U.S. Why? Because birds migrate. As they move about the world, they come in contact with other birds. Just like humans, birds get the flu; they die if it is a particularly lethal strain of flu.

Is it a threat? It is important to understand that avian influenza is a BIRD disease that has agricultural and economic importance for countries that must destroy infected birds. Just consider if you raised chickens for a living and had to destroy your entire flock. To date, the virus is not a threat to the health of the U. S. military or the population in Europe. It is still very difficult for humans to get this disease. It requires very close contact with ill or dead birds and their waste products or secretions. Just because it isn't a threat now doesn't mean we should not take precautions to prevent it in the future. Avoid contact with "wild things with wings" (wild fowl such as swans, geese, birds, etc.). If you come upon a dead bird, the best thing to do is leave it there. Call the installation veterinarian if you are suspicious of the cause of death.

Dead birds or waterfowl found on U.S. military installations and housing areas:

Notify the installation veterinarian office. Practice good sanitary hygiene: don't handle dead birds found outdoors. Don't allow your pets or children to be exposed to dead birds or waterfowl. Veterinary officials will advise you on

safe disposal practices in very low-risk situations. If appropriate, they will contact the proper installation support personnel or local national authorities for disposal of dead birds.

Sick or injured birds: Notify the installation veterinarians if sick or injured water fowl are found on a military installation or housing area. The veterinarian will determine the proper course of action, considering the location, circumstances, and situation.

Domestic cats and dogs: There are 101 good reasons to keep your pet cat indoors. One more good reason is to keep them from being exposed to infected birds. This is also a good reason to keep your dogs on a leash.

Dead bird testing: Do not take dead or sick birds to the installation authorities or the installation veterinarians to test for avian flu. Wherever you live in Europe, your host nation country will test dead birds for avian flu if necessary. It has important agricultural and economic implications for their economies. Military veterinarians will coordinate, when appropriate, with host nation authorities for testing of birds found on U.S. forces installations.

To contact a veterinary office in Europe, call your local operator for directory assistance. You can also find your installation veterinarian from the 100th Med. Detachment. entry on the 30th Medical Brigade Web site at <http://www.30thmed.army.mil/>.

Websites for further information:

U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine: <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/> (Contains links to avian flu information, as well as other health topics. Some materials are suitable for small-unit training.)

World Health Organization:

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm>