

# Avian influenza (bird flu) in BC

## How can I protect myself?

December 5, 2023



### What is avian influenza (bird flu)?

**Avian influenza (bird flu)** is a virus that easily spreads from bird to bird. It makes birds sick and can cause them to die. While it **mostly affects birds** like chickens, turkeys, geese, ducks, and swans, **it can affect other wild animals, too.**

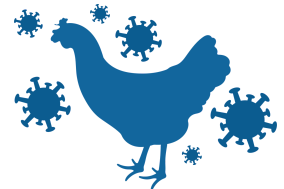
**Avian influenza can also infect people.** If you get exposed to a sick bird or animal, you can get sick, too. You can get sick if you touch sick birds or animals, then touch your eyes, nose, mouth or face. The symptoms are similar to the regular (human) flu.

If avian influenza spreads among people, **the virus can change and spread more easily**, making more people sick. **By protecting yourself, you also protect others.**

It's important to take steps to reduce your chances of getting sick from avian influenza. **Follow these tips to keep yourself and others safe.**

### What to do if you are near a sick or dead animal

- **Do not touch** sick or dead animals or their droppings.
- **Do not bring** sick wild animals into your home.
- **Keep your pets away** from sick or dead animals and their feces (poo). Prevent them from touching or eating them by keeping them on a leash.
- **Report dead or sick birds or animals** as follows:



Type of bird or animal	Who to contact
Domestic birds (e.g. pets, poultry)	<u><a href="#">Canadian Food Inspection Agency</a></u>
Wild birds (e.g. seabirds, geese, ducks, eagles)	BC Wild Bird Mortality Line: 1-866-431-2473
Wild mammals (e.g. foxes, racoon, skunks, minks)	During regular business hours: <u><a href="#">BC Wildlife Health Program (250-751-7246)</a></u> After hours: your <u><a href="#">nearest wildlife rehabilitator</a></u>
Marine mammals (e.g. seal, dolphin, porpoise)	<u><a href="#">BC Marine Mammal Response Network</a></u> 1-800-465-4336

## How to safely handle a sick or dead animal

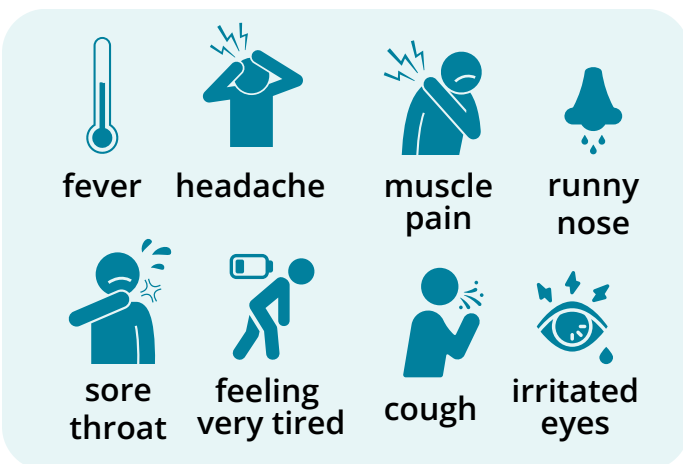
- If you have to handle sick birds or animals, **limit direct contact** with a sick or dead animal and **maintain distance** using a tool or shovel whenever possible.
- The following **protective equipment** is also recommended:
  - Medical mask
  - Rubber or disposable gloves
  - Eye protection (e.g., goggles, face shields, safety glasses)
  - Disposable gown or coveralls
  - Disposable protective shoe/boot covers or rubber boots
- **Do not touch your face** while or after handling sick or dead animals.
- **Always wash your hands** with soap and water after touching a sick or dead animal and after removing gloves.
- **Clean, disinfect or dispose** any potentially contaminated clothing, equipment or surface using the steps described [here](#).



## If you touched or handled a sick or dead wild animal

**Watch for symptoms for 10 days** after exposure to sick or dead animals.

**Symptoms include:**



## If you feel sick after being exposed to avian influenza

If you get symptoms within 10 days after exposure to sick or dead animals:

- **Tell your health care provider** that you have been in contact with animals and are concerned about avian influenza. This will help them give you appropriate advice on testing and treatment.
- **Stay home and away from others** while you have symptoms until 24 hours after your symptoms are gone. If you have to be near others, **wear a mask and wash your hands often**.

## For more information

- BC Centre for Disease Control: [bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/avian-influenza](https://bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/avian-influenza)
- BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food: [Avian influenza \(AI\) - Province of British Columbia](#)
- BC Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship: [Wildlife Health](#)
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency: [Status of ongoing avian influenza response by province](#)
- Public Health Agency of Canada: [Wildlife and avian influenza – Handling guidelines to protect your health](#)