ᑲᑐᑎᓗᒍ ᓄᓇᕗᑦ ᐱᕈᖅᐸᓕᐊᑎᓪᓗᒍ
Building Nunavut Together
Nunavuliuqatigiingniq
Bâtir le Nunavut ensemble

Public Health Advisory

Avian influenza suspected in two Nunavut communities

August 5, 2022
Nunavut-wide **60 sec**

The Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) has informed the Government of Nunavut (GN) of two suspected cases of avian flu in Nunavut discovered during surveillance testing. One case was detected in a live thick-billed murre on Coats Island near Sanikiluaq. The second case was detected in a herring gull near Cambridge Bay. Both samples have been sent for confirmatory testing and results are expected back in a few weeks.

To date, there have been detections of avian influenza in wild and/or domestic birds in all 10 provinces, the Yukon, and widespread detections in the United States.

The risk of avian influenza infection in the general public is considered low. There is no evidence to suggest that the avian influenza virus can be transmitted to humans through the consumption of fully cooked game birds or eggs. In general, human cases of avian influenza are caused by close, prolonged contact with infected live or dead poultry or contaminated environments. While the risk of human infection with avian influenza viruses is low, individuals should always use basic hygienic precautions when handling wild birds.

Avian influenza or bird flu is a viral infection that is highly contagious among birds and is found in domestic poultry and wild birds including raptors, gulls, terns, shorebirds, ducks, geese, and swans. Signs that a bird may have avian influenza include:

- Nervousness.
- Trembling or lack of coordination.
- Swelling around the head, neck and eyes.
- Diarrhea or sudden death.

Multiple dead birds in one location are a sign that the virus is present.

As many Nunavummiut actively engage in wild bird and egg harvesting, it is important to know the key precautions that should be taken to limit the spread of disease and minimize risk to people. Basic food safety measures the are recommended for hunters and other bird handlers to reduce the risk of illness and the spread of the virus include:

- Wearing gloves.
- Washing hands with soap and warm water.
- Clean soiled clothing, and equipment as soon as possible.

Guidance on best practices to reduce the risk of human infection has been developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the Government of Nunavut and can be accessed here.

If you notice any unusual death or illness in birds, contact your local conservation office. If you feel very sick after handling a bird, contact your local health centre. For more information, please refer to the Government of Canada's website.

###

Media Contact:

Chris Puglia
Manager of Communications
Department of Health
867 975-5949
cpuglia@gov.nu.ca