

# Public Health Advisory

## Avian Influenza confirmed in seals near Resolute Bay

**December 13, 2024**

## Resolute Bay, Nunavut

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The Department of Environment and the Department of Health, have confirmed cases of avian influenza in two ringed seals collected near Resolute Bay in October. This follows the detection of avian influenza found in a seabird earlier this October. Since then, there have been no known reported cases of transmission to other animals or humans.

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. In recent months, the virus has also been detected in mammals globally, including species native to the Arctic. Signs that wildlife could have avian influenza include:

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

Multiple dead birds or mammals in one location may be a sign that the virus is present. There is no current evidence of mammal-to-mammal transmission of the disease, as cases in mammals are almost exclusively linked to direct contact with infected birds.

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 mammals, game birds, or eggs. In general, human cases of avian influenza are caused by close, prolonged contact with infected live or dead wildlife or contaminated environments.

As many Nunavummiut actively engage in hunting and 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 are recommended for hunters and other 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 and the Government of Nunavut (GN), and can be accessed on the [GN website](#).

If you notice any unusual death or illness in wildlife, contact your local Conservation Officer. If you feel very sick after handling wildlife, contact your local health centre. For more information, please refer to the [Government of Canada's website](#).

The GN will not continue reporting subsequent confirmed cases. Please visit the Government of Canada's [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza tracker](#) for live data on cases of avian influenza in Canada.

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