

Revised 6/19/2006

Questions & Sample Answers

ECHO-TV Show #20 “Keeping Birds Free of Avian Influenza”

(Taping Date: Tuesday, June 27th, 2006 / 3:00-8:00 pm-TPT - TV)

Educational Objective: To inform people about how to keep birds free of diseases and in particular, avian influenza, as well as promote information about how to prevent bird diseases from spreading to people.

1. What are bird diseases and why should people care about them?

Answer:

- People should be concerned because some bird diseases can spread making birds sick or killing them including your own pet birds or poultry.
- By taking proper care of birds we can help keep birds free of diseases they can get from other birds. That’s good for the health of birds and humans.

2. What is avian influenza, or “bird flu”?

Answer:

- Influenza means “flu” and avian means “bird.” Bird flu is a disease that makes many *birds* sick including chicken, turkeys, geese and pet birds. That’s why it’s called bird flu.
- Poultry and other bird diseases don’t normally make people sick, but they can make other birds very sick or cause them to die.

3. What are the signs of avian influenza in birds?

Answer:

- Avian influenza is sometimes a very mild disease causing the birds to eat less and not lay as many eggs. They may even cough or sneeze.
- More severe forms of avian influenza will make birds very sick, very fast. They won't eat or lay eggs. In most cases all of the birds die in a day or so.
- A deadly type of avian influenza called "H5N1" has infected many birds in Asia, Europe and Africa causing them to be destroyed.

4. How does avian influenza or bird flu spread?

Answer:

- When sick birds mix with healthy birds the avian influenza can be passed from bird to bird in bird droppings (poop) or through coughing or sneezing.
- Wild birds like ducks or geese can bring avian influenza to healthy chickens and birds raised outdoors or in open pens.
- People, trucks and other equipment can spread the disease by having contact with an infected flock and then going to a farm or backyard with healthy birds.

5. What can I do keep my birds or poultry healthy?

Answer:

- The best thing to do to protect your birds from disease is to keep healthy birds away from sick birds or contaminated equipment and people.
- If you keep chickens in enclosed pens and pet birds indoors they can't mix with wild birds that might carry diseases.
- It's also important to keep bird cages clean and to wash your hands any time you handle birds.

6. Is it safe to eat poultry or eggs?

Answer:

- All poultry and eggs bought in retail stores have been inspected, so the chance of H5N1 being in food is unlikely.
- Properly cooked poultry (cooked to 165 degrees) is safe to eat. You should always cook meats and chicken thoroughly to kill food poisoning germs like salmonella – not just H5N1.
- And always wash your hands after handling raw meat or chicken.
- Don't drink raw blood or eat raw eggs. You need to cook raw meat and eggs to kill germs.

7. Can people get bird diseases if they step in wild bird droppings (poop)?

Answer:

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Q & A: June 2006 by ECHO (Emergency and Community Health Outreach) Minnesota (draft reviewed MN-AG & USDA 6-19-06)

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- There are no reported cases where people have gotten H5N1 from wild birds. But it's always best to avoid stepping in any animal droppings because they carry germs.
- If you get bird poop on your shoes or clothing you can clean them with a mild bleach and water solution. Also be sure to wash your hands with soap and water.

8. What should I do if I find a dead bird?

Answer:

- If you find a dead bird, you can either leave it be or simply put it in a plastic bag in the garbage, but try not to handle it with bare hands. Then wash your hands thoroughly.
- Or you may contact your county or state wildlife agency or farm extension office to report it.
- Some wild birds may carry bird flu viruses, but they usually don't make them sick.

9. What should I do if I think my birds have bird flu?

Answer:

- If your own birds are sick or dying call your veterinarian, State Veterinarian, or the United States Department of Agriculture (toll free at 1-866-536-7593).

10. Is there anything else our guest might like to add?

(Optional if time permits in the 7-9 minute segment available)