



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

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DNR monitoring for avian influenza in wild birds

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources and its federal partners are working together to monitor for the presence of avian influenza in Iowa's wild birds.

Avian influenza is a highly transmissible, naturally occurring disease often found in certain waterfowl and shorebirds. There are various strains of the disease ranging from strains causing no harm to domestic poultry to strains that are lethal.

"Bird loss in the wild is a natural occurrence, so seeing one dead bird shouldn't be cause for alarm, but if someone is finding a number of dead birds, especially ducks, geese or raptors, we want to know about it," said Dr. Rachel Ruden, state wildlife veterinarian with the Iowa DNR.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has an online database tracking avian influenza positive wild birds by state

at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-2022/2022-hpai-wild-birds>

Ruden said those who find five or more dead wild birds within a week should report their findings to their local wildlife biologist or state conservation officer. Contact information is available online at www.iowadnr.gov under the About DNR tab on the homepage.

(https://www.iowadnr.gov/Portals/idnr/uploads/contacts/wildlife_management.pdf)

(<https://www.iowadnr.gov/Portals/idnr/uploads/Law%20Enforcement/dnrlemap31422.pdf>)

Avian influenza can exist in a deceased bird for several weeks, depending upon environmental conditions.

"We are encouraging the public not to handle sick or dead birds or to take sick birds to a wildlife rehabilitator to avoid unintentionally spreading avian influenza in the event that the bird is positive," said Dr. Ruden.

At this point, she said, backyard birdfeeders are not of concern, unless mallards are actively using the feeder. Avian influenza's impact on upland birds, like wild turkeys, is much less, because of the behaviors and preferred habitats make them less likely to encounter the disease in the wild. Spring turkey hunters can find information on handling

and preparing wild turkeys online

at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/2015/fsc_hpai_hunters.pdf