



COLORADO Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Wildlife Health Program
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We are contacting you to provide information on the recent detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in other western states. To give you a brief background, two strains of HPAI (H5N2 and H5N8) were detected in domestic backyard bird flocks and wild waterfowl in northern Washington and Oregon in December 2014. In addition, H5N8 was detected in wild ducks in California in December 2014. In January 2015 an American widgeon sampled in Utah tested positive for HPAI strain H5N8. Idaho has also reported two detections of avian influenza, one in hunter-killed waterfowl and a second in several captive falcons that had been fed a wild duck. Thus far HPAI has not been detected in Colorado.

Avian influenza viruses naturally circulate in wild birds, especially birds associated with aquatic habitats. The virulence of the virus (low pathogenic or highly pathogenic) is determined by the infectivity for domestic poultry, and while most avian influenza viruses rarely cause illness in wild waterfowl, HPAI occasionally can cause disease and mortalities in wild birds. The two strains of HPAI currently circulating in the western US have not caused noticeable disease symptoms in waterfowl to date, but in Washington a gyrfalcon died from infection with H5N8 after being fed an infected duck.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife will continue to monitor for HPAI by testing sick and dead waterfowl and other high risk birds such as birds of prey and gallinaceous birds that have been submitted to the Wildlife Health Laboratory in Fort Collins.

We ask that you please report any illness or infections in your birds of prey, particularly if you think disease could have been transmitted from avian prey. The avian influenza virus can be transmitted to birds of prey from all ducks (including sea ducks), geese, swans, seabirds (alcids, fulmar, cormorants, grebes) cranes and herons. In a sick bird, you may see symptoms that include edema or swelling of the head, nasal discharge, depression or other signs of illness. Any corvid, gull, raptor, owl, or avian species that would potentially scavenge or prey upon waterfowl or seabirds could be candidates for infection involving AI. Please contact Colorado Parks and Wildlife to report suspect cases (<http://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/ContactUs.aspx>).

As a precaution, we are advising falconers avoid hunting wild avian species and particularly waterfowl during this HPAI outbreak. We also recommend against feeding waterfowl or other dead wild birds to captive raptors – although HPAI has not been detected here, die-offs of Eurasian collared doves attributed to pigeon paramyxovirus 1, an unrelated avian virus, have been occurring throughout Colorado since early December 2014 (<http://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/Wildlife-Health/PPMV-1.pdf>).

For more information on avian influenza:

<http://www.un-influenza.org/?q=content/oie-questions-and-answers-highly-pathogenic-h5n8-avian-influenza-strain>

<http://www.doi.gov/emergency/employeeemergency/upload/Updated-Employee-Health-and-Safety-Guidance-for-AI-Surveillance-and-Control-Activities-in-Wild-Bird-Pops-2014-FINAL-w-SIGNED-memo-JULY2014.pdf>

