



Public Health Division

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Press Release

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AVIAN FLU DETECTED IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY - Positive cases of avian influenza, or the bird flu, have been found in three wild birds in Santa Cruz County. While this particular strain of the virus poses minimal risk to humans, out of an abundance of caution the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency is warning residents of the potential risk of handling or coming into close contact with a diseased or dead bird.

Bird flu virus is transmitted through saliva droplets and feces occurring most commonly in wild migratory waterfowl and birds of prey. Infected birds may show signs of confusion or lack of coordination, diarrhea, coughing and sneezing are also common ailments. Sick or dead birds can be reported to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife through their [online form](#), at (707) 944-5531 or via email at askbdr@wildlife.ca.gov.

“It is best practice to never touch or handle birds who are deceased or exhibit signs of distress or illness,” said Dr. Gail Newel, Santa Cruz County Health Officer. “While severe cases of bird flu are possible in humans, we rarely see symptoms develop beyond those of the common cold.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers the human risk assessment for the general public to be low. People with job-related or recreational exposures to potentially infected birds are at higher risk and should take precautions listed on the [CDC website](#).

Although rare, symptoms to be aware of include fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, conjunctivitis, headaches, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches or diarrhea. If you develop symptoms within 10-days of exposure to an infected animal, call your health-care provider.