

2022 Waterfowl Hunting Season Avian Influenza Safety Recommendations

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is an infectious respiratory disease that is carried by both wild and domestic birds. This fall as birds migrate South through Oklahoma there is a potential for harvesting a migratory bird that is infected with HPAI. This year hundreds of detections of HPAI in migratory birds have been made across all four North American flyways. This poses a risk primarily to domestic and commercial poultry flocks but is also mildly transmissible to humans. The disease is spread through contact with saliva, mucous, and feces of infected birds. While few cases have been documented of transmission to humans, it is important to use precautions when handling downed migratory birds to protect yourself as well as any domestic birds back at home.

The USFWS has posted the following general safety guidelines for hunters handling wild birds and their tissues

- Do not handle or eat sick game.
- Field dress and prepare game outdoors or in a well-ventilated area.
- Wear rubber or disposable latex gloves while handling and cleaning game.
- When done handling game, wash hands thoroughly with soap or disinfectant, and clean knives, equipment, and surfaces that came in contact with game.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling animals.
- All game should be thoroughly cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F before being consumed.

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In addition to these, it is advised to spray your truck bed, boots, waders, game straps and other gear that has come into contact with wild birds with a mild bleach solution to prevent the spread of HPAI.

4floz/1gal, bleach/water

Burial or double bagging and responsibly disposing of carcasses is another important way to stop the spread of HPAI.

Link to the USFWS Avian Influenza information page

<https://www.fws.gov/avian-influenza#:~:text=General%20safety%20guidelines%20for%20hunters,while%20handling%20and%20cleaning%20game.>

Link to CDC Avian Influenza information page

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/index.htm>

Link to USDA APHIS Avian Influenza in wild birds detection map

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