

# Avian Influenza Virus

## Occupational Viral Infection from Handling Poultry

### What is Avian Influenza Virus?

Avian Influenza, more commonly known as Bird Flu, is a viral disease caused by avian influenza Type A viruses. It occurs worldwide and affects both domestic and wild birds.

### How does infection occur?

The virus spreads naturally between wild aquatic bird species and can infect domestic poultry and other terrestrial birds and animals. Human infections are rare, but have occurred. Virus is shed in the saliva, mucus and feces of infected birds. Bird flu viruses can be transmitted to humans via inhalation or ingestion of aerosolized virus particles or through direct contact with surfaces contaminated with the virus. Person to person infection is very rare.

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include upper and lower respiratory signs such as coughing, sneezing, runny nose, shortness of breath, fever, and wheezing. Swelling around the eyes and flu-like symptoms may also be present such as body aches.

### How do I prevent it?

Wear protective PPE such as gloves, gown, mask, and eye protection when working with poultry. Wash hands frequently with soap and water. Disinfect footwear when moving between flocks and farms. These measures will also help prevent the spread of Bird Flu to other birds.

### How is it treated?

Avian Influenza is treated with antiviral medication and supportive care.

### Resources used:

- List of Zoonoses - Special Pet Topics – (2016) *Merck Veterinary Manual* 11<sup>th</sup> ed.
- The Center for Food Security and Public Health Zoonotic Disease Factsheets: Avian Influenza
- The Center for Food Security and Public Health Zoonotic Transmission Routes: Avian Influenza
- Chapter 28, Selected Zoonoses, (2015) *Lab Animal Medicine*, 3rd ed.