

Precautions for handling dead wild birds

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The advice given here applies in circumstances where members of the public may find a dead bird.

Individual dead birds are generally not a cause for alarm, but multiple deaths of birds in a neighbourhood should be reported to:

- your local veterinarian,
- your Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB),
- NSW Department of Primary Industries, or
- the emergency animal disease watch hotline on 1800 675 888.

If the dead bird is a single, small garden or wild bird and you are not aware of recent similar cases within your neighbourhood, you do not need to report the incident.

You should either leave the bird alone or follow the guidelines below. The guidelines provide you with some simple hygiene precautions to minimise the risk of infection.

It is hard for people to catch a disease from dead birds. Even if the Asian H5N1 strain of avian influenza were to be found in Australia, these simple precautions would provide protection.

If you do have to move a dead bird:

- Avoid touching the bird with your bare hands.
- If burial is possible, dig a deep hole to about 50 to 75 cm depth. Then, using the spade or shovel, put the bird in the hole and replace the earth. The spade or shovel can be cleaned using water and normal household disinfectant.
- If disposal requires picking up the bird by hand, wear protective gloves, preferably disposable. If gloves are not available see below.

- Place the dead bird in a suitable plastic bag, preferably leak-proof. Care should be taken not to contaminate the outside of the bag. Tie the bag and place it in a second plastic bag.
- Remove gloves by turning them inside out and then place them in the second plastic bag. Tie the second bag and dispose of it in the normal household rubbish bin.
- Hands should then be washed thoroughly with soap and water.
- If gloves are not available, a plastic bag can be used as a make-shift glove. When the dead bird has been picked up, the bag can be turned back on itself to enclose the dead bird, and tied. It should then be placed in a second plastic bag, tied and disposed of in the normal household rubbish bin.
- Any clothing that has been in contact with the dead bird should be washed using ordinary washing detergent, at the temperature normally used for washing the clothing.
- Any contaminated indoor surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned with normal household cleaner.

Exposure of any potentially contaminated tools or surfaces to direct sunlight is an added precaution. Viruses such as the avian influenza virus are killed by 30 minutes exposure to direct sunlight.

All media enquiries on this topic should be directed to Public Affairs and Media staff on 02 6391 3312 or 02 6391 3311.

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