

## ROUTING PUBLIC REPORTS OF SICK OR DEAD WILD BIRDS

In the past, Local Public Health Authorities received calls from the public about dead birds primarily out of concern about West Nile Virus (WNV). Birds in the Corvid family (Crows, Jays, Magpies) and some other species have been tested for WNV, but other causes for disease and death have not been explored. Tracking diseases or conditions affecting wild birds allows wildlife officials to identify trends and outbreaks. Much like public health surveillance, this information can aid in identifying effective disease control strategies and possibly influence wildlife management policies.

Wildlife experts believe that avian influenza will likely be introduced into North America via migrating birds and have implemented surveillance systems to detect it when it arrives. Part of this surveillance system is investigation of bird die-offs. Although the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) receives many reports directly from the public, some reports may go to other agencies, including public health. To help assure that appropriate reporting of these events to ODFW, the following guidelines should be followed when reporting sick or dead wild bird reports to ODFW.

Birds and other animals die every day from a variety of causes and maladies, however, it is not physically or financially possible to collect and sample every dead bird statewide. ODFW biologists must target their response to specific situations.

When the Local Public Health Authority receives reports of sick or dead **wild birds**:

1. Determine if the bird is in the Corvid family (crows, jays, magpies). Consult with the State Public Health Veterinarian or Acute & Communicable Disease Prevention (ACDP) on-call epidemiologist. West Nile Virus testing may be warranted for these birds.
2. For WNV testing, collect and send the sample to Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.
3. Refer the caller to the local ODFW office, hotline (866-968-2600), or wildlife veterinarian (541-231-9271) in the following situations:
  - a. If multiple birds of any species are involved, indicating illness or a die-off from a pathogen or contaminant; **or**
  - b. When sick or dead birds (single or multiple) are ducks, geese, swans or shorebirds (sandpipers, phalaropes, dowitchers); **or**
  - c. If the incident is unusual or unexplained (the bird is acting sick, dies acutely while flying, etc.);

In addition, birds must be submitted within 24 hours of death to make an accurate diagnosis.

If none of the above criteria apply, provide the reporting party information on handling and disposing of dead birds (attachment 1).

Do NOT refer the following calls to ODFW:

- If it is suspected or determined that the bird died of trauma from hitting a stationary object (window, power line), moving vehicle (found on or near a road) or projectile (BB, pellet, bullet) or by predation (cat).
- If a bird is obviously injured (broken wing, leg), have the reporting party contact their local wildlife rehabilitator. Contact information for Oregon wildlife rehabilitators can be found at:  
<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~devo0028/contactN.htm#or>

**If a zoonotic disease is presumed or confirmed, ODFW will forward the information to State Public Health.**

## **ROUTING PUBLIC REPORTS OF SICK OR DEAD DOMESTIC BIRDS (PET BIRDS, POULTRY)**

When a **private citizen** calls to report sick or dead domestic birds (e.g., pet birds, domestic poultry), the caller should first be referred to their private veterinarian. If the caller does not have or is unwilling to call a private veterinarian, then refer them to the State Veterinarian at Oregon Department of Agriculture.

When a **veterinarian** calls to report sick or dead domestic birds (e.g., pet birds, poultry) these calls should be referred to the State Veterinarian at Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Don Hansen, DVM, MPVM  
State Veterinarian  
Oregon Dept of Agriculture  
635 Capitol Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301-2532  
503-986-4680  
Fax: 503-986-4762

Oregon Department of Agriculture and USDA, Veterinary Services have veterinarians trained as Foreign Animal Disease Diagnosticians (FADD). They will discuss the situation with the caller, and if warranted, an FADD will be dispatched to collect samples and more in depth information.

**If a zoonotic disease is presumed or confirmed, ODA will forward the information to State Public Health.**



## **Handling and Disposing of Dead Birds**

- Avoid direct contact with the bird.
- Wear disposable latex gloves while handling the bird or wear gloves that you can immediately put through a hot soapy wash. A dead bird can also be picked up by inverting a plastic bag on your hand and grasping the bird through the plastic.
- Double bag the bird in plastic bags and place in a sealed garbage can or other safe container where it cannot be disturbed by other animals.
- Do not bring the bird into your home.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke or touch your face with the gloves while handling the bird.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after handling the bird.