

Information for Hunters

Fowl pest, an epizootic disease

Fowl pest (also known colloquially as “bird flue”) is an epizootic disease and is spread through an influenza A virus. The currently rife influenza virus is of the sub-type H5N1. These viruses are common among birds of passage – these do not, or only slightly, become diseased, but can be significant in the spreading of the virus. Such fowls as chicken and turkey, however, are extremely susceptible to “bird flue”.

Transmission to humans

In principle “bird flue” is transmitted only from animal to animal. Infection of humans by an infected animal is fundamentally possible, but very seldom occurs, and only following very close contact between the animal and humans.

The virus is expelled from the animal in excrement (droppings), saliva and lacrimal fluid, whereby excrement has high virus content. Infection takes place directly or through contact with infected material, such as excrement, transport boxes, tools, egg cartons, footwear, clothing and vehicles. Infection through the air is also possible with heavy dust development.

Measures against the spreading of “bird flue”

Until recently fowl pest occurred above all in Asia, but for some time cases have increased in Europe. After several wild birds also perished through fowl pest in Austria in the middle of February, the Federal Minister of Health and Women ruled that the transmission of fowl pest to domestic fowls is to be hindered. Accordingly, it is ruled that nationally all fowls are to be kept in closed coops or enclosures. Furthermore, all wild birds found dead must be reported to the official veterinary surgeon at the responsible district-administration office. Together with these regulations, which are valid throughout Austria, in individual areas close to previous discovery sites of infected wild birds, protection and surveillance zones were established, for which exceptional measures are in force (see www.bmgf.gv.at).

Special rules for hunters/obligatory registration

Attention: the hunting of waterfowl is currently prohibited throughout Austria!
The hunting of wild birds is still prohibited within the protection and surveillance zones!

Please observe: every waterfowl found dead is to be reported to the official veterinary surgeon at the district-administration office. Avoid all contact with diseased or dead birds. If you should have come into contact with diseased or dead fowls, however, wash your hands thoroughly.

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For further information you can contact the **Information Hotline** of the Austrian Agency for Health and Nutritional Safety (AGES) at **050 555 666**.

Legal reference:

No claim for completeness is made for this paper and is in no way liable.

Further information is available at www.ages.at and at www.bmgf.gv.at, where the Austrian Pandemic Plan and the "Crisis Plan for Classic Fowl Pest and Newcastle Disease 2000" can be downloaded.