



TOWN OF PLYMOUTH

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UPDATES AND TESTING OF DECEASED WATERFOWL AT PLYMOUTH'S BILLINGTON SEA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 1/19/2025

PLYMOUTH, MA – The Town has actively been collaborating with state officials regarding the deceased birds discovered at Billington Sea and is working diligently to provide timely updates to the community. Clean Harbors, contracted by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, along with Town officials were onsite Sunday morning, January 19, 2025, at 9:00am to safely assess and remove the affected birds. The state will begin lab tests on the removed birds to determine cause of death.

The Town was informed by the Massachusetts State Ornithologist on Saturday, January 18, 2025, that a deceased goose removed from Plymouth last week is highly suspect of having H5N1, commonly known as avian influenza (HPAI) or bird flu. There is only one lab in the United States that can officially confirm a "positive" case, therefore, we have been informed that it may be several days before we have a fully definitive result. While we await those test results, the state has advised that we treat this as avian influenza.

Town and state officials continue to advise residents to keep all domestic animals away from any deceased birds and to avoid contact themselves. **The Town will continue to collaborate with state officials regarding this matter and will update the public as more information becomes available.**

Plymouth's Department of Health and Human Services in accordance with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) highlights the following to advise the community:

- People should avoid direct contact with wild birds and other animals infected with or suspected to be infected with avian influenza A viruses.
- If you must have direct/close contact with infected or potentially infected birds or other animals, wear recommended personal protective equipment (PPE).

- As a general precaution, whenever possible, people should avoid direct contact with sick or dead wild birds, poultry, and other animals, and observe them only from a distance.
- If you must have direct/close contact with sick or dead wild birds, poultry, or other animals, wear recommended personal protective equipment (PPE). Wild birds can be infected with avian (bird) influenza (flu) A viruses even if they don't look sick.
- Do not touch surfaces or materials (e.g., animal litter or bedding material) contaminated with saliva, mucous, or animal feces from wild or domestic birds or other animals with confirmed or suspected avian bird influenza A virus infection.
- Do not touch or consume raw milk or raw milk products, especially from animals with confirmed or suspected avian influenza A virus infection
- Avian influenza viruses spread through direct, bird-to-bird contact. They can also spread via contaminated surfaces or materials, such as manure; egg flats, crates, or other farming materials and equipment; and people's clothing, shoes, or hands.
- Removal of deceased birds or other wildlife should be left to Town and state officials.
- All backyard poultry should be corralled for the foreseeable future and **not** let to roam free range.

“Poultry owners should keep their birds away from wild waterfowl, limit the number of people that have access to your flock, and if you share equipment with other bird owners, clean and disinfect between locations,” **states Plymouth’s Public Health Director, Karen Keane.**

According to the CDC, handling infected birds is unlikely to lead to illness in people. However, you should seek medical attention if you experience any influenza-like symptoms or illness within 10 days of handling sick or dead birds.

If you discover a deceased animal, either domestic or wild, residents should report to the Town’s Health and Human Services Public Health Division by calling 508-322-3339 and to the Animal Control Office by calling 508-888-1186. To report large-scale wild bird die-offs or other unusual signs in wild birds, contact the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) by calling 1-866-4-USDA-WS or 1-866-487-3297.

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