

West Nile virus



Ontario's dead bird program no longer in effect

With the continued presence of West Nile virus from year to year, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has confirmed West Nile virus is established in Ontario. As a result, Ontario will no longer be conducting a West Nile virus dead bird surveillance program. Along with other municipalities across Ontario, York Region will no longer pick up dead birds or ask residents to report dead bird sightings in 2009.

If you find a dead bird, you are asked to dispose of it using the tips listed below.

Can I get West Nile virus by handling a dead bird?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus that is spread to humans **by the bite of an infected mosquito**. Mosquitoes become infected when feeding on an infected bird. The virus can also be passed on from the infected female mosquito to her eggs and subsequent larvae that are produced. There have been no cases of WNV in humans from contact with infected birds or other animals when proper precautions were taken.

How should I safely dispose of a dead bird?

Residents who find a dead bird are asked to dispose of it as follows:

- Do not use your bare hands to handle a dead bird. Always wear leak proof rubber gloves or use two layers of a leak proof plastic bag inverted over your hand
- Bury the bird at least two feet deep on your property
- Do not dispose of dead birds through the municipal garbage systems
- After touching or handling a dead bird, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and running water

For more information on York Region's Solid Waste policies and practices, please call **1-877-464-9675** or visit **www.york.ca/waste**.

Are dead birds tested for the H5N1 avian (bird) influenza?

H5N1 is a particular subtype of the avian (bird) influenza virus. The H5N1 virus has not been detected in Canada, and at this time, there is no reason to believe that backyard birds or wild birds are a threat to the public.

As of August 1, 2006, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, other government agencies and the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Centre began testing birds for H5N1 avian influenza.

If you find **three or more** dead birds of any species together or any **birds bigger than a crow** (approximately 15" or larger), please **call the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre at 1-866-673-4781**. The Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre may pick up these birds and test them for avian influenza.