

Bird Flu Quick Facts

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www.nawabirds.org

- All influenza A viruses originated in birds.
- Influenza epidemics occur nearly every winter and are responsible for approximately 114,000 hospitalizations and 20,000-50,000 deaths in the U.S. on an annual basis.
(<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5107a1.htm>).
- Despite the fact that the annual influenza viruses may have originated in birds, birds are not involved in the spread of the influenza viruses that infect humans.
- For many millennia, new strains of Avian Flu have been arriving in North America via migrating waterfowl on an annual basis. H5N1 is no more likely to infect humans than the Avian Flu strains that arrive every year yet do not infect humans.
- The typical way a flu virus makes the jump from birds to humans is through an intermediate host such as a pig. Once the virus becomes a human virus, it is humans, not birds, which spread the disease.
- Pet birds are NOT a risk factor for catching the flu. There have been no documented cases of humans catching Avian Flu from pet birds such as parrots, finches and other commonly kept species
(<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/avian-flu-humans.htm>).
- Animal husbandry practices in the United States are not conducive to the mingling of avian flu strains with human flu strains.
- Since 1997, more than 16 outbreaks of H5 and H7 influenza have occurred in poultry within the United States. The virus strains in each of these outbreaks were just as likely as H5N1 to become human influenza viruses, yet none of them made the jump from avian virus to human virus.
- Despite the fact that there have been millions of H5N1 infected poultry in Asia in the past few years, only a little over one hundred human H5N1 cases have been reported. This is an extremely small number in comparison to the large numbers of human exposures there.