

GUIDANCE FOR ROUTING REPORTS OF SICK OR DEAD BIRDS

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), the American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*), 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.

One way that avian influenza could be introduced into North America is via migrating birds. Wildlife officials 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 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), or an American Robin;
2. Consult with the State Public Health Veterinarian or Acute & Communicable Disease Prevention (ACDP) on-call epidemiologist at 971-673-1111. West Nile virus testing may be warranted for these birds;
3. For WNV testing, collect an oropharyngeal swab sample, transfer to a Whatman FTA card, and send the sample to Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. FTA cards will be available to Local Health Departments and vector control agencies (see attachment 1);
4. If the bird is found over the weekend, keep it in a cool place or refrigerated until the next working day.
5. 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.).

Disposal: Birds should be handled with gloves, the carcass should be double bagged tied and place in the trash.

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.

Instructions for collecting oropharyngeal swab secretions from Corvidae and American Robins, and their transfer to Whatman FTA® cards

The FTA card by Whatman Inc. is a convenient method of storing a nucleic acid specimen while inactivating pathogens thereby allowing the transport of the sample via standard US mail. The Whatman FTA card® used for WNV sampling is an “indicating” card meaning it is treated with a pink chemical that blanches to white when fluid is absorbed by the card. The blotter card itself is contained in an outer paper cover appearing much like a paper matchbook.

Inside the paper cover, the blotter paper has a pink blotter with a large circle on it. The following procedure is suitable for crows, jays, magpies and other Corvidae species which are known to have a high concentration of virus in the oral secretions. Other birds should be submitted whole for brain removal.

1. Gloves should always be worn while handling dead birds.
2. Fill out the WNV surveillance submission form and note a bird identification number on it that will be recognizable to you.
3. Place an FTA card on a clean surface and record the bird identification and submitter on the outside of the card.
4. Open a packet containing a sterile swab.
5. Grasp the plastic stick of the swab in one hand and open the beak of the bird with the other.
6. Insert the swab into the oral cavity and swab the top, sides and back of the mouth and throat.
7. Try to wet the swab with as much oral secretion as possible and then remove the swab from the mouth.
8. Open the cover of the FTA card to expose the pink circled blotter paper.
9. Firmly press the swab onto the blotter paper and roll it back and forth in the center of the circle to transfer the oral secretion onto the blotter. The pink blotter should blanch to white as the liquid is transferred. Be aware that it is not necessary to wet the entire circled area. Try to concentrate the transfer into the center of the circle.
10. Prop open the FTA card and allow to air dry for 1 hour.
11. Appropriately bag and dispose of the bird and swab.
12. To transport the FTA card to the lab for testing, place the card in the foil lined Whatman Multi-Barrier pouch. Remove the protective adhesive strip cover and seal by folding along the perforated line.
13. Only one FTA card should be placed in a multi-barrier pouch.
14. Place the pouch and the completed Surveillance Form into an envelope and mail to:

WNV Surveillance
Oregon State University
Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
PO Box 429
Corvallis, OR 97339-0429

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.