



January 21, 2015

Dear Falconer,

As you may be aware, two different strains of avian influenza viruses were detected from birds in Washington in mid-December 2014. An H5N2 virus was isolated from one wild Northern Pintail duck and an H5N8 virus was isolated from one captive Gyrfalcon, a falconer's bird which was fed wild waterfowl meat. Both viruses were identified as highly pathogenic due to their ability to cause high mortality in domestic poultry. Both H5N2 and H5N8 viruses have been found in other parts of the world and have not caused any human infection to date.

Subsequent detections of H5N8 have been made in a backyard poultry flock in Oregon and apparently healthy hunter-harvested wild ducks in California and Utah. In addition, Idaho Fish and Game released information to falconers in that state regarding the deaths of three captive peregrine falcons from an avian influenza virus after feeding on a wild duck. Because avian influenza viruses naturally circulate in waterfowl and shorebirds, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is recommending that falconers in California avoid hunting of wild water birds. We currently do not know the full extent or distribution of these viruses, but surveillance is ongoing in California, and surrounding states.

As part of the surveillance effort, the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratories in partnership with the California Department of Food and Agriculture provide testing for disease surveillance and management of backyard poultry and pet birds through their Avian Health Program. This program was recently expanded to provide complimentary avian influenza testing for falconer's birds that show signs of illness or die suddenly; owners are responsible for additional charges if a full necropsy is desired.

If you observe signs of illness or increased mortality in your captive birds, please call the Sick Bird Hotline at 1-866-922-2473. To report wild bird mortality contact the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Wildlife Investigations Laboratory at 1-916-358-2790 or online at:

<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Laboratories/Wildlife-Investigations/Monitoring/Mortality-Report>

Sincerely,

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