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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For More Information:

Andrea Whitmarsh, MPH – Program Coordinator, Essex County Health Department
518-873-3546 | andrea.whitmarsh@essexcountyny.gov

Essex County Health Department Addresses Avian Influenza

Elizabethtown, NY – The Essex County Health Department (ECHD) is actively monitoring the presence of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), commonly known as bird flu or H5N1, in the region. With a rise in detections in 2025, the [Cornell Wildlife Health Lab](#) has confirmed H5N1 in nearly 100 birds across New York State, including cases in Essex County. As surveillance efforts increase, the public may encounter reports of, or direct observations of, sick or deceased wild birds. While the current risk to human health remains low, ECHD is committed to keeping the community informed.

“Our priority is to safeguard the health and well-being of Essex County residents,” said Linda Beers, Director of Public Health for ECHD. “Although there is no evidence of person-to-person transmission and the risk to the public is minimal, we recognize that public health situations can evolve. While the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Department of Agriculture and Markets lead efforts related to animal health, we continue to monitor developments and will provide updates on any impacts to human health. Our approach remains proactive—just as we have established surveillance and prevention measures for other communicable diseases, like rabies - we are applying the same diligence to avian influenza.”

Key Information for the Public:

- **Established Presence:** Avian influenza has been detected in the U.S. since 2022 and has affected both wild birds and various mammal species, including domestic animals.
- **Low Public Health Risk:** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the current risk to humans remains low.
- **No Known Person-to-Person Transmission:** The CDC has reported 70 human cases of H5N1 in the U.S., with one fatality, primarily linked to direct exposure to infected dairy cattle or poultry farm operations. There is no evidence of person-to-person spread.
- **Animal Health Connection:** Protecting animal health is integral to safeguarding public health. Avoid direct contact with sick or dead wildlife, following [NYS Department of Environmental Conservation \(NYSDEC\) Guidance](#).



- **Report Sick or Dead Birds:** To report suspected cases of avian influenza in wild birds, please utilize the online form provided by the NYSDEC: <https://dec.ny.gov/news/press-releases/2025/1/dec-launches-new-web-based-form-to-report-suspected-cases-of-highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza-in-wild-birds>
- **Resources for Farms:** Avian influenza can impact poultry farms and dairy cattle. Livestock and commercial and hobby poultry farmers should increase their biosecurity measures to help prevent the spread of the disease. For more information, refer to: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza-hpai>

Addressing Local Concerns:

The Essex County Health Department is aware of reports regarding a juvenile bald eagle in Willsboro and a group of geese in Westport. We are monitoring these reports and will share any pertinent public health updates as they become available.

The Health Department encourages residents to stay informed about avian influenza through reliable sources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

<https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/index.html>

or New York State Department of Health's avian influenza resource page:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/avian/index.htm>

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