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Dead Bird Handling Instructions

**Please call the Department of Health and Human Services
Bureau of Infectious Disease Control, 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345 x4496
prior to the collection of any dead bird.**

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has used dead bird reporting and virus testing to confirm West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) are established in New Hampshire communities. As further testing would not add to this understanding, we have discontinued dead bird testing on a regular basis. However, under certain circumstances (e.g., unusual large die-offs without a known cause), birds may be tested for diseases that might affect human health only if the testing has been authorized by DHHS staff prior to transport.

What should you do if you find a dead bird?

If you have observed a bird or birds that have died under unusual circumstances, call your local animal control officer, health officer, their designated representative or in their absence, call the New Hampshire Bureau of Infectious Disease Control, 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345 x4496. You will be asked questions about the circumstances and the condition of the birds in order to determine if they are potentially viable specimens for testing. If you are calling after hours, leave a message including your name and telephone number. You will receive a return call the next business day. If testing is approved, it is the responsibility of the local community to arrange for the transportation of dead birds to the NH Public Health Laboratories, such as through animal control officers. **Please do not deliver birds without prior authorization.**

Birds to be tested must meet the following criteria:

- Dead less than 24 hours
- Not decomposed or maggot infested
- Not overtly traumatized (no blood, ripped out feathers, etc.)
- Not found close to a building (window crash)

Dead birds not eligible for testing may be disposed of by burial, or double bagging in zip-lock type plastic bags and placed in the trash. Although WNV or EEE have not been shown to spread directly from birds to people, we urge citizens not to touch dead birds, or any other dead animal, with bare hands.

In the event DHHS staff has determined the bird(s) are suitable specimens for testing it will be important to follow the steps listed below and provide the requested information to the official who is picking up the bird(s), if there is a collection and pick-up procedure in place.

1. Use waterproof gloves when handling a dead bird. If you don't have gloves, insert your hand into a plastic bag, grasp the bird carefully and invert the bag over the bird.
2. Each bird should be double-bagged. Place each bird in a separate sealed leak-proof plastic bag, then place each bird inside a second sealed bag. See-through zipper lock style plastic bags are recommended.
3. If possible, refrigerate the bird immediately in an insulated container with freezer packs or in a refrigerator not used for food, or place ice packs on top of the bird and invert a pail over it, weighted down to avoid being dislodged, until the bird can be picked up.
4. Attach the intake form (see the Bird Intake Form) or a piece of paper to each bag with the following information:
 - a. Species (if known)
 - b. Date collected
 - c. Location where bird was found (town/street/address, etc.)
 - d. Name, address and phone number of reporting individual
 - e. Include any additional relevant information on the back of the form
5. Transport the bird at refrigeration temperature to the NH Public Health Laboratories in Concord within 24 hours or as soon as possible.

For more information see the NH WNV & EEE Website at
<http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/arboviral/index.htm>
or call the NH Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345 x4496