

West Nile Virus: Birds

Q. What should I do if I find a dead bird?

A. Check with your local or state health department for instructions on reporting and disposing of a dead bird. If you need to pick up a dead bird, or local authorities tell you to simply dispose of it: Avoid bare-handed contact with any dead animals, and use gloves or an inverted plastic bag to place the bird carcass in a garbage bag.

Q. Do birds infected with West Nile virus die or become ill?

A. In the 1999 New York area epidemic, there was a large die-off of American crows. Since then, West Nile virus has been identified in more than 100 species of birds found dead in the United States. Most of these birds were identified through reporting of dead birds by the public.

Q. How can I report a sighting of dead bird(s) in my area?

A. State and local health departments start collecting reports of dead birds at different times in the year. Some wait until the weather becomes warm before initiating their surveillance (disease monitoring) program. For information about reporting dead birds in your specific area, please contact your state or local health department.

Q. Why do some areas stop collecting dead birds?

A. Some states and jurisdictions are no longer collecting dead birds because they have sufficiently established that the virus is in an area, and additional testing will not reveal any more information. Shifting resources away from testing of dead birds allows those resources to be devoted elsewhere in surveillance and control.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/westnile, or call the CDC public response hotline at (888) 246-2675 (English), (888) 246-2857 (Español), or (866) 874-2646 (TTY)

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