Is chicken and other poultry safe to eat?

FAST FACTS:

- The presence of a highly pathogenic avian influenza has been confirmed in wild birds in Whatcom County and domestic poultry in Benton County.

- An emergency rule is in place in Benton and Franklin counties establishing a quarantine zone and restricting movement of poultry and poultry products. Visit [www.agr.wa.gov/lawsrules/rulemaking](http://www.agr.wa.gov/lawsrules/rulemaking) for the complete quarantine rule and a detailed map.

- Although avian influenza is a highly contagious disease to domestic poultry, there are no apparent risks to human health from domestic poultry or domestic poultry products.

- It is safe to eat poultry products, including meat and eggs.

- Protect your flock by practicing good biosecurity:
  - Sanitize equipment and clothing used around them;
  - Protect them from contact with wild birds; and
  - Control access to their pens.

- Industry and government response teams have been organized and are working to handle the situations and ensure safety.
Background:

In December, highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was confirmed on farms in British Columbia, Canada. HPAI was detected in wild birds in Whatcom County as a result of heightened surveillance following the Canadian outbreak in British Columbia. Two separate virus strains were identified: H5N2 in a northern pintail duck and H5N8 in a captive gyrfalcon that was fed wild waterfowl.

HPAI H5N2 has since been identified in two flocks in Benton County. Both flocks have been humanely euthanized. A quarantine order is currently in place in parts of Benton and Franklin counties to restrict the movement of poultry and poultry products by order of WSDA.

State and federal agencies are conducting outreach in the immediate area within Benton and Franklin counties aimed at backyard bird owners. Owners are encouraged to practice good biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of spreading the disease by preventing contact between their birds and wild waterfowl.

Chicken and other poultry is safe to eat:

- The movement of poultry and other products from Canada has been restricted.
- The movement of poultry and poultry products from the quarantine zone in Benton and Franklin counties is prohibited.
- All flocks are tested before being processed.
- Federal inspectors continue to monitor all poultry processing.
- Stores sell only federally inspected poultry.

The keys to safer food:

- Keep clean; wash hands and surfaces.
- Separate raw and cooked meat; avoid cross-contamination.
- Cook meat thoroughly to an internal temperature of 165°F.
- Chill; keep and store food at 40 °F (4.4 °C) or below and the freezer at 0 °F (-17.7 °C) or below.

Who can I contact?

- If you see sickness in birds, please contact WSDA Avian Health Program at 1-800-606-3056.
- If you are concerned because you or your family member becomes sick, please contact Washington State Department of Health at 1-800-525-0127.

More Information:

- WSDA - WSDA Avian Health Program
- USDA - www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/birdbiosecurity/AI/
- International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) – HPAI and Food Safety - www.who.int/foodsafety/fs_management/No_02_Avianinfluenza_Dec04_en.pdf
- FDA – What Consumers Need to Know About Avian Influenza - www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm085550.htm