

How to handle Dead Birds or Dead Bird Inquiries



Developed by the Georgia Division of Public Health Notifiable Diseases
Epidemiology Section in partnership with the Georgia Department of Agriculture
Office of the State Veterinarian, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and
the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study

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How to handle Dead Birds or Dead Bird Inquiries

The recent spread of Asian Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1, also commonly referred to as “bird flu,” in Asia, Europe, and Africa has resulted in concern and increased surveillance for H5 Avian Influenza viruses in North American bird populations. The following information provides guidance for those who are concerned or receive inquiries about sick or dead birds.

Please be advised to avoid handling any sick or dead birds before contacting the appropriate persons listed below and getting specific instructions. If more than one bird is sick or dead, please make this clear when consulting with appropriate agency/persons.

1. **Personally owned birds:** Any sick or dead birds that are personally owned (i.e. pet birds) should be referred to the caller’s veterinarian for consultation.
2. **Wild bird species:**
 - **Waterfowl or shorebirds** (e.g. ducks, migratory geese, swans, seagulls, etc): Individual birds of these species have been infected with the Asian HPAI H5N1 virus in affected regions (i.e. Asia, Europe and Africa) and may have contributed to the global spread of the virus. Surveillance in North America has detected low pathogenic H5 strains in some species of these birds, but there has been no Asian HPAI H5N1 detected in North American birds at the time of this writing (October 3, 2006). Some species of these birds are included in the wild bird avian influenza surveillance program in Georgia. Canadian geese in GA are considered resident, nonmigratory birds and will not be considered for avian influenza surveillance under most circumstances. All inquiries about sick or dead waterfowl or shorebirds should be directed to a GA Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Game Management Specialist in the appropriate region (refer to the appendices for talking points and contact information).
 - **Birds of prey** (e.g. falcons, hawks, eagles, etc): Individual birds of these species have become sick with the Asian HPAI H5N1 virus in affected countries, presumably after consuming an infected bird. As a result, some species will be included in the Georgia wild bird avian influenza surveillance program. However, they may also be infected with the West Nile Virus. Refer inquiries to a GA Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Game Management Specialist in the appropriate region (refer to the appendices for talking points and contact information). They will determine if avian influenza and/or WNV testing is appropriate.
 - **Other birds** (e.g. cardinals, sparrows, blue jays, crows, pigeons etc): These birds do not typically carry avian influenza viruses and are considered at very low risk for Asian HPAI H5N1 infection at this time. However, they may be infected with the West Nile Virus (WNV). Inquiries about these birds should be referred to County Environmental Health Offices in reference to WNV. Talking points and a contact list of Environmental Health Offices are in the appendices to this document.

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3. **Poultry species** (e.g. quail, turkeys, chickens): **If less than 4 birds, or less than 10% of the total flock, are involved** (sick and/or dead) inquiries should be referred to the closest laboratory in the GA Poultry Laboratory Network (map of laboratories and contact information in the appendices of this document). Please call the laboratory for instructions. The GA Poultry Laboratory will encourage persons to submit bird(s) themselves to the laboratory (see dead bird handling protocol below). **If 4 or more birds, or 10% or more of the flock, are involved** (sick and/or dead), the GA Department of Agriculture State Veterinarian or the USDA Area Veterinarian in Charge needs to be notified so that a Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) may be dispatched to investigate. A Department inspector or animal health technician may be requested by the VMO to transport the birds to the laboratory.

<u>State Veterinarian's Office</u> Bus Hrs 404-656-3667 800-282-5852 ext. 3667 Wkends/Eve 800-TRY-GEMA	<u>USDA Area Veterinarian's Office</u> 770-922-7860 (24/7)
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How to handle dead birds:

If testing is not necessary, please follow the guidelines below to dispose of a dead bird, as appropriate:

- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling animals.
- Put hand(s) in a plastic bag turned inside out and pick up the bird using the plastic bag. Turn bag right-side-out over the bird and seal bag with bird inside.
- Dispose of bird in trash.
- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and warm water (or with alcohol-based hand sanitizers if hands are not visibly soiled)

To collect a sick or dead bird for testing, please follow the guidelines below:

- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling animals.
- Wear water-proof gloves that can be disposed of or decontaminated and protective eyewear (glasses)
- Place bird in a plastic, sealable bag. Seal bag with bird inside
- Place bag with bird into a second plastic bag and seal
- Refrigerate the bag (e.g. on ice in a portable cooler or in a refrigerator that does not contain food) and take to the lab as soon as possible. Do not freeze.
- If a live, sick bird, call the laboratory for instructions on proper handling and transport
- Dispose of the gloves as trash
- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and warm water (or with alcohol-based hand sanitizers if hands are not visibly soiled)

How to handle Dead Birds or Dead Bird Inquiries

Web links:

Southeastern Wildlife Disease Study
<http://www.uga.edu/scwds/index2.htm>

Georgia Division of Public Health
<http://health.state.ga.us/index.asp>

Georgia Department of Agriculture
http://agr.georgia.gov/00/article/0,2086,38902732_0_40604866,00.html

U.S. Geological Survey
<http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian>

U.S. Department of Agriculture
<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome>

U.S. Poultry and Egg Association
<http://www.poultryegg.org/AvianInf/avian.html>

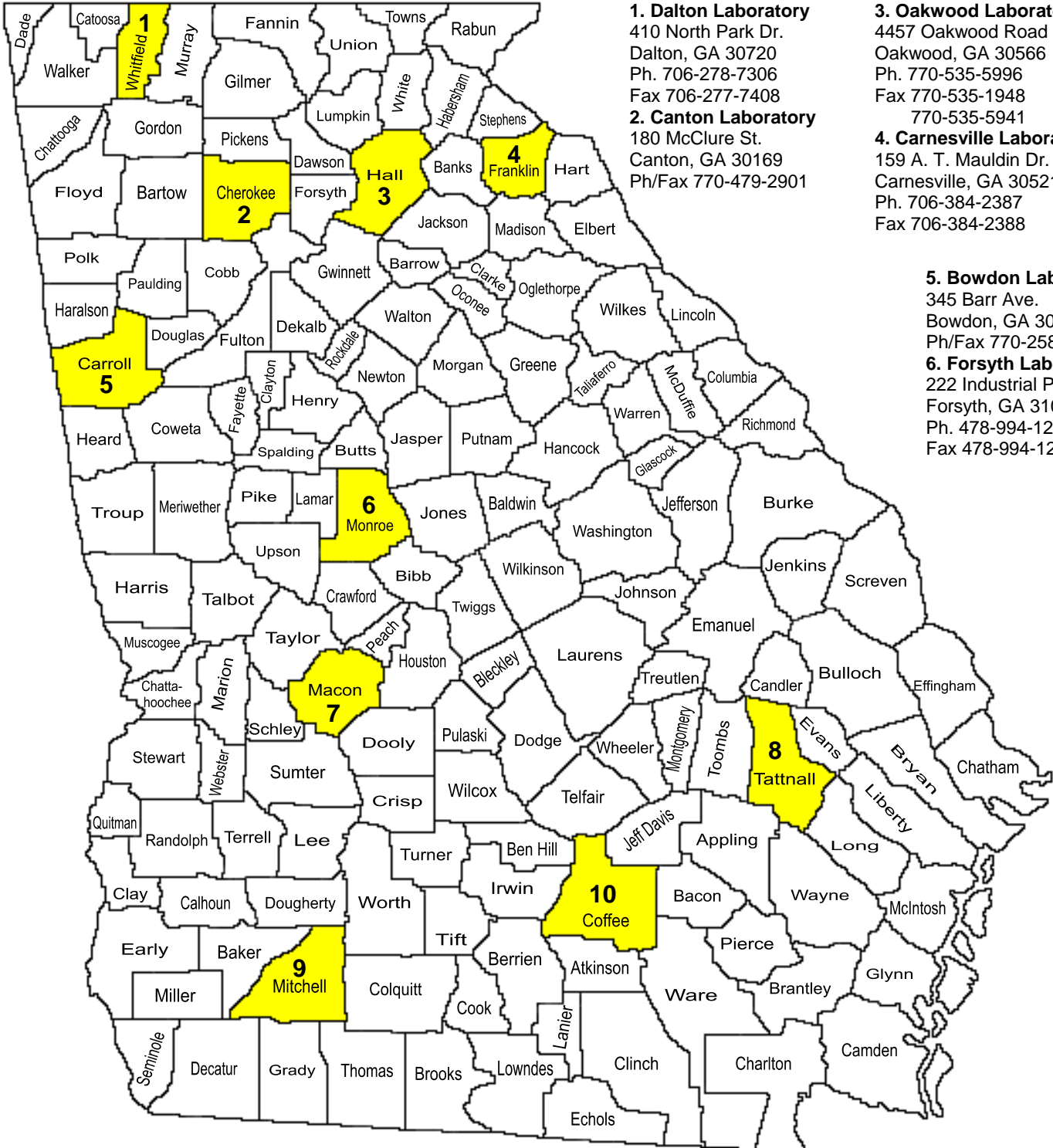
Georgia County Environmental Health Offices

Appling	(912) 367-4601	Atkinson	(912) 422-3332
Bacon	(912) 632-4712	Baker	(229) 734-5226
Baldwin	(478) 445-1591	Banks	(706) 677-5009
Barrow	(770) 307-3502	Bartow	(770) 387-2614
Ben Hill	(229) 426-5288	Berrien	(229) 686-1770
Bibb	(478) 749-0106	Bleckley	(478) 934-6590
Brantley	(912) 462-6165	Brooks	(229) 263-7585
Bryan	(912) 653-4331	Bryan - Richmond Hill	(912) 756-2611
Bulloch	(912) 764-5969	Burke	(706) 554-3456
Butts	(770) 504-2230	Calhoun	(229) 849-2515
Camden	(912) 729-6012	Candler	(912) 685-5765
Carroll	(770) 836-6781	Catoosa	(706) 935-6322
Charlton	(912) 496-2561	Chatham	(912) 356-2160
Chattahoochee	(706) 989-3663	Chattooga	(706) 857-3471
Cherokee	(770) 479-0444	Clarke	(706) 583-2658
Clay	(229) 768-2355	Clayton	(678) 610-7199
Clinch	(912) 487-2199	Cobb	(770) 435-7815
Coffee	(912) 389-4458	Colquitt	(229) 891-7100
Columbia	(706) 541-1318	Cook	(229) 896-3030
Coweta	(770) 254-7422	Crawford	(478) 836-3167
Crisp	(229) 276-2680	Dade	(706) 657-4213
Dawson	(706) 265-2930	Decatur	(229) 248-3058
DeKalb	(404) 508-7900	Dodge	(478) 374-5576
Dooly	(229) 268-4725	Dougherty	(229) 438-3943
Douglas	(770) 920-7311	Early	(229) 723-3707
Echols	(229) 559-5103	Effingham	(912) 754-6850
Elbert	(706) 283-3775	Emanuel	(478) 237-7501
Evans	(912) 739-2088	Fannin	(706) 632-3024
Fayette	(770) 460-5730	Floyd	(706) 295-6316
Forsyth	(770) 781-6909	Franklin	(706) 384-5575
Fulton Central	(404) 730-1301	Fulton North	(770) 640-3053
Fulton South	(770) 306-3244	Gilmer	(706) 635-6050
Glascock	(706) 598-2061	Glynn	(912) 264-3931
Gordon	(706) 624-1440	Grady	(229) 377-8857
Greene	(706) 453-0965	Gwinnett	(770) 963-5132
Habersham	(706) 776-7659	Hall	(770) 531-3973
Hancock	(706) 444-6616	Haralson	(770) 646-9212
Harris	(706) 628-5037	Hart	(706) 376-2582
Heard	(706) 675-3456	Henry	(770) 954-2078
Houston	(478) 218-2020	Irwin	(229) 468-5003
Jackson	(706) 367-3643	Jasper	(706) 468-6850
Jeff Davis	(912) 375-2425	Jefferson	(478) 625-3716
Jenkins	(478) 982-2811	Johnson	(478) 864-3542
Jones	(478) 986-3164	Lamar	(770) 358-1483

Georgia County Environmental Health Offices

Lanier	(229) 482-3294	Laurens	(478) 272-2051
Lee	(229) 759-3014	Liberty	(912) 368-5520
Lincoln	(706) 359-3154	Long	(912) 545-2107
Lowndes	(229) 245-2314	Lumpkin	(706) 867-2730
Macon	(475) 472-8121	Madison	(706) 795-2131
Marion	(229) 649-5664	McDuffie	(706) 595-1740
McIntosh	(912) 832-5473	Meriwether	(706) 672-4974
Miller	(229) 758-3344	Mitchell	(229) 336-2055
Monroe	(478) 993-3081	Montgomery	(912) 583-4602
Morgan	(706) 752-1268	Murray	(706) 695-0266
Muscogee	(706) 321-6170	Newton	(770) 784-2121
Oconee	(706) 769-7060	Oglethorpe	(706) 743-8181
Paulding	(770) 443-7877	Peach	(478) 825-6939
Pickens	(706) 253-0900	Pierce	(912) 449-2032
Pike	(770) 567-8972	Polk	(770) 749-2270
Pulaski	(478) 783-1361	Putnam	(706) 485-8591
Quitman	(229) 334-3697	Rabun	(706) 212-0294
Randolph	(229) 732-2414	Richmond	(706) 667-4234
Rockdale	(770) 785-5948	Schley	(229) 937-2208
Screven	(945) 564-2182	Seminole	(229) 524-2577
Spalding	(770) 467-4230	Stephens	(706) 282-4507
Stewart	(229) 838-4859	Sumter	(229) 928-2982
Talbot	(706) 665-8561	Taliaferro	(706) 456-2316
Tattnall	(912) 654-5290	Taylor	(478) 862-5472
Telfair	(229) 868-7404	Terrell	(229) 995-2188
Thomas	2292264241	Tift	(229) 386-7961
Toombs	(912) 526-8108	Towns	(706) 896-8873
Treutlen	(912) 529-4217	Troup	(706) 845-4085
Turner	(229) 567-4357	Twiggs	(478) 945-3351
Union	(706) 781-3824	Upson	(706) 647-5749
Walker	(706) 639-2574	Walton	(770) 267-1430
Ware	(912) 283-1875	Warren	(706) 465-2252
Washington	(478) 552-3210	Wayne	(912) 427-2042
Webster	(229) 828-3225	Wheeler	(912) 568-7061
White	(706) 348-7698	Whitfield	(706) 272-2005
Wilcox	(229) 365-2310	Wilkes	(706) 678-2622
Wilkinson	(478) 946-2226	Worth	(229) 777-2168

GEORGIA POULTRY LABORATORY NETWORK



1. Dalton Laboratory
 410 North Park Dr.
 Dalton, GA 30720
 Ph. 706-278-7306
 Fax 706-277-7408

2. Canton Laboratory
 180 McClure St.
 Canton, GA 30169
 Ph/Fax 770-479-2901

3. Oakwood Laboratory
 4457 Oakwood Road
 Oakwood, GA 30566
 Ph. 770-535-5996
 Fax 770-535-1948
 770-535-5941

4. Carnesville Laboratory
 159 A. T. Mauldin Dr.
 Carnesville, GA 30521
 Ph. 706-384-2387
 Fax 706-384-2388

5. Bowdon Laboratory
 345 Barr Ave.
 Bowdon, GA 30108
 Ph/Fax 770-258-0300

6. Forsyth Laboratory
 222 Industrial Park Rd.
 Forsyth, GA 31029
 Ph. 478-994-1219
 Fax 478-994-1220

7. Montezuma Laboratory
 150 Airport Dr.
 Montezuma, GA 30108
 Ph. 478-472-9904
 Fax 478-472-9905

8. Glennville Laboratory
 1221 Downing Musgrove Rd.
 Glennville, GA 30427
 Ph. 912-654-0504
 Fax 912-654-0526

9. Camilla Laboratory
 400 Burson Rd.
 Camilla, GA 31730
 Ph. 229-336-0001
 Fax 229-336-0018

10. Douglas Laboratory
 150 Tom Frier Dr.
 Douglas, GA 31533
 Ph./Fax 912-384-3719

DEAD BIRD TALKING POINTS

There are two sections to these talking points: Asian Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 (Asian HPAI H5N1), commonly called “bird flu”, and West Nile Virus (WNV).

Asian Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1

Avian Influenza Virus in Birds and Other Animals:

- Like humans, birds have naturally occurring influenza (flu) viruses. “Bird flu” is a non-scientific term that is used to describe a specific virus (Asian Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1) that has been spreading in Asia since 1997 and is now in Europe and Africa. This particular virus has been associated with human illness and death.
- Naturally occurring avian influenza viruses in wild birds are generally associated with waterfowl (ducks and geese), gulls, and some species of shore birds and typically do not cause illness in these birds. These lowly pathogenic viruses occasionally “jump” from these wild birds to domestic poultry such as chickens, quail and turkeys where they may mutate into highly pathogenic forms. The Asian HPAI H5N1 virus is one that has mutated to become highly pathogenic to poultry and now also has been associated with deaths in wild birds and humans.
- Lowly pathogenic avian influenza (referred to as the North American LPAI strain) can occasionally be found among wild bird populations in North America and can occasionally infect domestic poultry. Wild bird surveillance in North America has found lowly pathogenic H5 viruses among wild birds in several states and Canada. On the date of this writing (October 3, 2006), the Asian HPAI H5N1 virus has not been detected in North America or the United States.
- There are two potential routes that migratory birds from infected countries could introduce the virus to North America. Infected migratory birds from Europe may expose North American migratory birds in the Atlantic Flyway in Canada, or infected migratory birds from Asia may interact with North American birds in the Pacific Flyway in Alaska. Georgia is in the Atlantic Flyway and may be impacted if birds in this flyway become infected from interactions in Canada, or from interactions with birds traveling between Alaska and the Chesapeake Bay.
- No poultry, fresh poultry products, or live bird imports from countries affected by avian influenza are legally allowed to enter the US.
- Cats that eat infected birds have become infected and have died of “bird flu.” However, there is no evidence of efficient transfer of the Asian HPAI H5N1 virus from cats.

Surveillance for Asian HPAI H5N1, “Bird Flu,” in Georgia:

- There is increased surveillance for avian influenza among shorebirds, waterfowl and poultry in North America, including Georgia. This surveillance is being lead by the USDA Wildlife Services in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and is designed to detect the Asian HPAI H5N1 virus if present in Georgia wild bird populations. Other wild birds such as songbirds, crows, sparrows and pigeons are not usually infected with avian influenza viruses, so it is not beneficial to include them in a surveillance program at this time.
- The Georgia Department of Agriculture is also assisting with increased surveillance among commercial and non-commercial poultry flocks in Georgia.

DEAD BIRD TALKING POINTS

- The Georgia Division of Public Health is not collecting dead birds for Asian HPAI H5N1 testing at this time.
- Dead cats are not part of surveillance in Georgia because of the low risk of infection and transmission.

Human Risk of Asian HPAI H5N1, “Bird Flu”:

- Birds infected with Asian HPAI H5N1 shed large amounts of virus in their saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. The Asian HPAI H5N1 virus is spread between birds through contact between an uninfected bird and an infected bird’s saliva, nasal secretions, or feces. Human illness has resulted from prolonged and direct contact with infected birds and their feces or with environments contaminated with infected bird feces. Most commonly this contact has been during the preparation of live, infected birds for human consumption.
- The Asian HPAI H5N1 virus does not spread easily from birds to humans and the number of people that have become ill with bird flu is very small considering the size and duration of the outbreak among domestic birds and the large number of persons who have been exposed.
- There have been no human Asian HPAI H5N1 infections as a result of human contact with cats. Cat infections have been very rare.
- There is no human risk of Asian HPAI H5N1 infection from eating commercially-available chicken products from the U.S. at this time. According to the USDA Food Safety Inspection Service, poultry is safe to eat when cooked to the proper internal temperature. Asian HPAI H5N1 is not a food safety concern when safe handling procedures are followed.

West Nile Virus (WNV):

WNV in Birds and Mosquitos:

- WNV is a virus found in birds that may cause disease in some species of birds. It can occasionally cause disease in humans and horses, and rarely in other mammals.
- WNV is spread by mosquito bites. A mosquito must bite an infected bird first before it can infect anything else.
- The mosquitoes primarily found infected with WNV (*Culex* spp) prefer to feed on birds, but will occasionally bite humans and other mammals.
- Dead birds give public health a way of tracking virus activity, but because they can be highly mobile, they are not a good indicator of disease risk at any given location.
- Not all birds are tested for WNV, because not all birds die from WNV. Certain bird species appear to be highly susceptible to the disease, and it is these birds that are picked up for testing. The birds found to be most susceptible throughout the United States are crows, blue jays, and birds of prey (hawks). In Atlanta, it appears that crows and jays continue to be the birds that are most affected by the virus. In other counties this may be different, so other species of birds might be tested.
- There are strict guidelines for what kinds of birds are picked up and in what condition. This is to assure that resources are being used in an optimal fashion, since birds die from many things besides WNV.

DEAD BIRD TALKING POINTS

- We know WNV is here in Georgia; testing the occasional bird is all that is needed to help with surveillance of virus activity, especially in areas where mosquito surveillance is not being done.
- Horses, like humans, are at risk of getting WNV if bitten by mosquitoes that are carrying the virus. Commercial vaccines are available through a veterinarian to help protect horses from WNV infection.

WNV and Humans:

- You cannot get WNV from handling dead birds or by contact with a sick horse, human, or other mammal.
- WNV is usually a more a severe problem for the elderly and for those with chronic disease, although everyone should take precautions to avoid or limit mosquito bites.
- Knowing that a particular bird is positive or negative should have no effect on what you do to protect yourself and your family from WNV.
- Everyone, except infants and pregnant women, should wear a DEET-based repellent when outside if mosquitoes are biting. Two other products, picaridin (Cutter Advanced™) and oil of lemon eucalyptus, have also been found to be good mosquito repellents, although these may not provide adequate protection against tick bites. Pregnant women and parents of infants should ask their health care providers for information on product use, although DEET-based repellents can be used on children over the age of 2 months. **USE ALL PRODUCTS ACCORDING TO LABEL INSTRUCTIONS.**
- Putting Repel Permanone® on your clothing (not your skin) will also help protect you from mosquito and tick bites. This product is available in sporting goods stores. Pregnant women and parents of infants should ask their health care providers for information on product use.

How to Limit Sources of WNV in the Environment:

- Do not use repellents designed for humans on your pets. Ask your veterinarian for products that can be used on animals.
- It is important to empty all containers around your house and in your neighborhood that can hold water at least once a week, as many mosquito problems are created locally by mosquitoes breeding in flower pots, gutters, catch basins (storm drain inlets or curb inlets), unintended swimming pools, and any container that can hold water for more than a week.
- Be sure all gutters are cleaned regularly. Window screens should be in good repair and in use if windows are open.
- There are many things you can do to protect yourself and your family. These do not change if a bird is sent in for testing, so it is not important for every dead bird to be tested.

DEAD BIRD TALKING POINTS

Testing Dead Birds:

- Dead birds should be reported to the county environmental health department.
(Environmental Health Contact Numbers:
<http://health.state.ga.us/pdfs/environmental/contactinformation.04.pdf>)
- Environmental Health will most likely make note of the location of the bird, but may or may not pick the bird up for testing. Most counties are keeping a log of dead bird calls to help with WNV surveillance, and there may be a report line available for after working hours. If no one is available at the county to take the information, the bird may be safely disposed of, but precautions should be taken to reduce exposure to mosquitoes regardless.
- If the bird is not picked up for testing, which is possible, you can safely dispose of it by double bagging and placing it in the trash or by burying it. Birds dead of WNV do not pose a human threat. They are useful only as an indicator of increases or decreases in virus activity.
- Do not handle the bird with bare hands. Although WNV is not transmitted this way, it is always best to take this precaution when handling any dead animal.
- Birds must be very fresh for testing to be useful. If the bird is not refrigerated, decomposition occurs rapidly in the tissues needed for testing for virus, so birds that have been dead more than 48 hours (eyes will be shrunken or gone) or birds covered in ants usually do not have testable tissues.
- Virus, even if present, cannot easily be isolated from birds that have been dead more than 48 hours, unless these birds have been refrigerated within 48 hours of dying. Birds covered with ants are also not good candidates for testing as ants destroy the organs needed for testing.