

Don't touch dead birds, Region warns, as avian flu is found in area

Residents are reminded not to touch dead birds as York Region has identified several cases of avian flu.

York Region is one of many jurisdictions across Canada currently dealing with presumed avian influenza, also known as bird flu.

York Region Public Health issued the warning last week after several geese were found dead in Newmarket's Fairy Lake area.

With geese starting to return to the community, many York Region municipalities, including Newmarket are seeing cases of birds that have died or are infected with presumed avian influenza (H5N1), also known as bird flu, said the Town of Newmarket in a statement. The Town of Newmarket's Animal Services team has responded to reports of geese in distress at Fairy Lake and stormwater management ponds.

The virus, said the Region, is transmitted through the wild bird population but can be transmitted to other animals, as well as commercial poultry.

York Region residents are reminded to:

- Keep a distance from wild birds and other wild animals, and don't touch, feed or handle them, especially if they look sick or are dead
- Report any animals, specifically geese or birds, found ill or dead to your local municipal animal service and/or the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative
- Consider removing backyard bird feeders and/or bird baths. If not, take the following precautions including moving them far away from pets and cleaning them with 10% bleach at least once every two weeks. They should be placed as far away as possible from where domestic animals spend time
- Avoid contact with surfaces that appear to be contaminated with droppings from birds
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after touching any bird feeders, bird baths or any potentially contaminated areas
- Keep cats indoors and dogs on a leash to limit the potential of your pet encountering an infected bird
- Stay off all bodies of water as ice and water conditions are not safe; do not attempt to rescue birds in distress

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, wild birds in Canada and throughout the world are natural carriers of avian influenza viruses. Although some wild birds may get sick and die, others can be infected and still appear healthy.

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