

Toronto Wildlife Centre braces for the COVID of the bird world, as two positive cases in wild patients at their hospital are confirmed

Toronto, Ontario, May 5th, 2022 – The first detection of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in North America occurred in December 2021 in Newfoundland and Labrador. On March 21, 2022, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) reported HPAI in a red-tailed hawk that was found in Waterloo – the first confirmed case in Ontario.

Since then, dozens of HPAI cases have been confirmed in wild birds as well as domestic birds in southern Ontario, and continue to be confirmed across North America. It is anticipated that many more wild birds will contract this disease.



Wild birds in Canada and throughout the world are natural carriers of avian influenza viruses, often called "bird flu". These viruses typically cause little or no harm to wild birds, but a more serious "highly pathogenic" form can develop that may lead to severe illness in a variety of birds including waterfowl (who can carry the disease without showing symptoms), gulls, shorebirds, birds of prey, corvids (blue jays, crows and ravens), as well as domestic poultry.

Although AI is considered a zoonotic disease (an infectious disease that may be transmitted from animals to humans, or from humans to animals), current evidence suggests that transmission between birds and people is extremely low. There is presently only one known case of HPAI in a human in North America.

Toronto Wildlife Centre (TWC) has now confirmed two positive cases, one in a Canada goose and another in a turkey vulture, who were admitted to the facility.

During this challenging time, it is our goal at TWC to continue providing life-saving medical and rehabilitative care to avian patients of all species. **Almost 75% of our admissions last year were birds and we admit thousands of sick, injured and orphaned birds in the spring and summer – our busiest seasons.** We simply can't turn our back on vulnerable birds when they need us most!



Following guidelines from CFIA and other organizations monitoring this disease, and by adjusting our protocols as necessary, TWC's teams are going to great lengths to minimize risks in order to keep wild bird patients and people safe. We have installed an outdoor triage tent where high-risk birds will be assessed, ordered extra medical equipment, increased the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), added disinfectant foot baths and shoe scrubs at entrances to bird enclosures, and will even have dedicated staff and volunteers working with specific species groups to avoid possible spread of disease among patients in care.

Although these necessary changes have posed a significant challenge as we head into our busiest time of year, it will be worth it to save the lives of as many sick, injured and orphaned wild birds as possible.

Members of the public finding sick, injured or orphaned birds are asked to please call TWC's Wildlife Hotline at (416) 631-0662 and leave a message, or fill out our online [Request Assistance Form](#). A member of our team will respond to gather details, assess the situation, and provide next steps. Members of the public may also consult our website www.torontowildlifecentre.com for guidance on handling and containing birds.

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