**March 19, 2025**

**The Bird Flu- Myths vs Facts**
Recently, the news has been circulating with discussions surrounding Avian Influenza, also commonly referred to as the bird flu. The bird flu primarily affects wild and domestic birds, dairy cows, cats, and some wild mammals. The reason why this disease is a public health issue is because there have been reported cases of humans with the bird flu. It is important to know the facts of this disease in order to stay safe and well informed. Below are the common facts to address the myths of bird flu.

Essex County Office of Public Health utilized information from peer-reviewed articles to develop this article for informational and educational purposes.

*For further information about the bird flu, please see the references sited at the end of the page.*

**Myth**

“The bird flu spreads easily from birds to humans just by being in the same area.”

**Fact**

Human infections with bird flu are rare. They usually happen when someone has close contact with infected birds, like touching and handling sick or dead birds or eating raw poultry. Just being in the same area as an infected bird doesn’t typically spread the virus.

**Myth**

“You can get bird flu from eating chicken or eggs.”

**Fact**

Properly cooked poultry and eggs at a temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit is safe to eat and does not transmit bird flu.

**Myth**

“Bird flu is easily spread from human to human.”

**Fact**

Human-to-human transmission of bird flu is rare, although possible. The most common way the bird flu spreads is through animal to human contact.

**Myth**

“All human cases of bird flu can lead to death.”

**Fact**

According to the CDC, of the 70 reported cases in the United States since April 2024, there has been only one confirmed death.

**Myth**

“The bird flu has the same symptoms as the seasonal flu.”

**Fact**

Symptoms of the bird flu vary based on the severity of infection but typically follow a progression:

·                     **Early Symptoms**: Fever, cough, sore throat, conjunctivitis, and muscle pain

·                     **Progressive Symptoms**: difficulty breathing, chest pain, and fatigue

·                     **Severe Symptoms**: Rapid progression to severe respiratory failure, often accompanied by rapid breathing, low oxygen level), hypotension. In some cases, altered mental status and cyanosis (bluish skin due to lack of oxygen) occur, suggesting advanced respiratory failure or organ dysfunction.

In conclusion, it's important to know the truth about the bird flu, to avoid misunderstanding the risks. The bird flu doesn't spread easily from birds to humans unless there's close contact, like touching sick birds or eating raw poultry. Eating properly cooked chicken and eggs is safe. While human-to-human spread is rare, it can happen. Most people who get the bird flu don’t die from it, and many don’t experience severe symptoms. However, it can cause serious illness, so it’s important to recognize the symptoms early. By understanding these facts, we can stay safe and avoid unnecessary worry.

**References**

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