



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES



Dead Bird Handling Instructions

**Please call the Department of Health and Human Services
WNV & EEE Information Line, 1-866-273-6453 prior to the collection
of any dead bird since we will not test *every* dead bird reported.**

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) will collect only a sample of the dead birds reported during the West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) season. As the season progresses, discontinuation of bird sampling will occur rapidly once the presence of the virus has clearly been demonstrated in a community or county.

While the DHHS is interested in collecting information about dead birds as part of our efforts to understand the movement of WNV and EEE, only a limited number of birds will actually be tested due to targeting our testing efforts to establish the presence of these viruses in NH communities, as well as limitations in collection and delivery of the specimens.

Monitoring dead bird sightings within NH could indicate the presence of WNV or EEE, although not every dead bird found will be related to these infections. The viruses can be isolated only from relatively fresh carcasses found in the first 24 hours after dying. Remember, not every dead bird will be infected and not every dead bird is valuable for testing.

What should you do if you find a dead bird?

If you find one or more dead bird(s), call your local animal control officer, health officer, their designated representative or in their absence, call the WNV Information Line, 1-866-273-6453. You will be asked questions about the bird's condition in order to determine if it is a potentially viable specimen for testing, and if your community has the ability to transport the specimen. You will be given instructions on how the bird should be processed. If you are calling the Infoline after hours, leave a message including your name and telephone number. You will receive a return call within a short period of time. **Please do not deliver birds without prior authorization.**

If you know the bird has been dead for more than 24 hours, please inform us. Although it will not be testable, we will use your report to help determine if more intensive surveillance efforts are needed in your area

Dead birds not eligible for testing may be disposed of by burial, or double bagging in zip-lock type plastic bags and placed in the trash.

In the event DHHS staff have determined the bird is a suitable specimen for testing, it will be important to provide the following information to the official who is picking up the bird, if there is a collection and pick-up procedure in place:

1. Species of bird (if known)
2. Date and Time found or first noticed
3. City or Town where the bird was found
4. Street address or closest physical address where the bird was found
5. Your name and telephone number

How should a dead bird be collected?

WNV and EEE have never been known to spread directly from birds to people, however dead birds and all dead animals must not be handled with bare hands.

1. Use waterproof gloves when handling a dead bird. If you don't have gloves, insert your hand into a plastic bag, grasp the bird carefully and invert the bag over the bird.
2. Each bird should be double-bagged. Place each bird in a separate sealed leak-proof plastic bag, and then place each bird inside a second sealed bag. See-through zipper lock style plastic bags are recommended.
3. If possible, refrigerate the bird immediately in an insulated container with freezer packs or in a refrigerator not used for food, or place ice packs on top of the bird and invert a pail over it, weighted down to avoid being dislodged, until the bird can be picked up.
4. Attach the intake form (see the Bird Intake Form) or a piece of paper to each bag with the following information:
 - a. Species (if known)
 - b. Date collected
 - c. Location where bird was found (town/street/address, etc.)
 - d. Name, address and phone number of reporting individual
 - e. Include any additional relevant information on the back of the form
5. Transport the bird at refrigeration temperature to the NH Public Health Laboratories in Concord within 24 hours or as soon as possible.

For more information, or for bird test results see the NH WNV & EEE Website at <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov> or call the NH DHHS WNV & EEE Information line at 1-866-273-6453

For health care providers with clinical questions or to report human suspect or probable cases, please contact the NH Communicable Disease Control Section at 1-800-852-3345 ext. 4496 or 271-4496