



NEWS FROM
ULSTER COUNTY
County Executive Jen Metzger

******For Immediate Release******

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Spring Chicks Are Cute, But Caution is Key: Prevent the Spread of Avian Flu

THERE ARE NO CURRENT ACTIVE CASES IN ULSTER COUNTY

KINGSTON, NY - In response to the ongoing risk of Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) spreading to domestic poultry and wildlife, the Ulster County Health Department is urging the public to be very thoughtful about backyard flocks of chickens and ducks. This is especially important around the Easter holiday, when many people purchase baby chicks and ducklings, often unaware of the health risks, challenges, and heightened disease spread during Avian Flu outbreaks.

In January, a Bird Flu case was confirmed at an Ulster County farm, leading to the loss of 50 birds and precautionary measures to prevent further spread. There are currently no reported cases of human transmission of Bird Flu in New York State.

“We understand that many people are motivated by the desire to produce their own food or enjoy the company of animals. However, with Avian Flu still a threat, it’s crucial that people follow the CDC guidance to keep yourself and your animals safe,” **said Ulster County Public Health Director Eve Walter**. CDC guidance can be found at www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/caring/index.html.

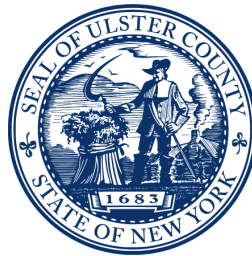
Avian Flu is a highly contagious viral disease that primarily affects wild and domestic birds. The virus can spread rapidly through direct contact between infected birds, contaminated surfaces, or even through the air. Allowing backyard poultry to roam freely or interact with wild birds increases the risk of virus spread. Migratory birds can transmit the virus to domestic flocks and vice versa, creating a dangerous cycle that becomes difficult to control.

Although the risk of transmission to humans remains low, the economic impacts are substantial, particularly for the poultry industry, which can face significant losses from the culling of infected flocks.

Exposure to infected animals can cause symptoms in humans like red, itchy eyes, fever, sore throat, cough, runny nose, and headaches. In birds, the disease progresses rapidly — watch for signs such as sudden death, loss of appetite, swelling or discoloration, and nasal discharge. Avoid handling sick birds under any circumstances.

For more information on preventing the spread of Avian Flu, contact the Ulster County Department of Health at 845-334-5527. For additional information, visit <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/avian/>.

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