



POINT DEFIANCE ZOO AND NORTHWEST TREK TAKE PRECAUTIONS TO PROTECT BIRDS FROM AVIAN FLU

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TACOMA/EATONVILLE, Wash.— Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and Northwest Trek Wildlife are taking extra precautions to protect their birds from highly pathogenic avian influenza, also known as bird flu.

State officials confirmed the detection of the bird virus May 6 in a Washington non-commercial backyard poultry flock in Pacific County. On May 10, bird flu was detected in two non-commercial backyard flocks in Pierce County.

“We’re taking all precautions to keep the birds in our care safe and healthy,” said Alan Varsik, director of the two sister zoos. “Our veterinarians are working closely with state and federal officials and following all recommendations to protect our birds from potential infection.”

Bird flu is spread primarily through wild migratory birds and their feces so staff at both zoos are taking measures to prevent contact between their birds and wild birds.

At Northwest Trek in Eatonville, staff are moving all birds to covered off-exhibit areas in the wildlife park. That includes four bald eagles, a golden eagle, snowy owls, a barn owl, and trumpeter swans.

At Point Defiance Zoo in Tacoma, animal care teams have moved the most highly susceptible birds, including a peacock, penguins, puffins and murrelets, to off-exhibit covered areas.

The birds participating in the new Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater show, like the chickens, the king vulture, red-legged seriema, macaw, Eurasian eagle owl, hornbill, and bald eagle, live indoors and in covered areas, and do not have contact with wild birds during the show.

The Budgie Buddies Aviary will remain open to guests, as budgies are not considered at high-risk for developing infections.

As for the humans: the risk of spreading avian flu from birds to people is low, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Bird flu infections in people are rare and most commonly occur after contact with infected birds while not wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.

Viral spread can occur through contaminated shoes, clothing, vehicles, and equipment that have virus

particles on them. Staff and volunteers at both zoos are required to follow strict protocols in the areas where birds live, like disinfecting their shoes in foot baths before entering those animal areas. Those who volunteer at wildlife rehabilitation facilities or have backyard poultry are also required to shower and change their clothes and shoes before coming to work.

“Our veterinarians and keepers will continue to assess this rapidly evolving situation,” said Varsik. “They are closely monitoring all birds in our care for any signs of sickness.”

MORE INFORMATION

Washington Dept. of Agriculture

[Avian Influenza | Washington State Department of Agriculture](#)

Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

[Avian influenza \(bird flu\) | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#)

Washington Dept. of Health

[Avian Influenza | Washington State Department of Health](#)

U.S. Department of Agriculture

[USDA APHIS | Avian Influenza](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[Information on Bird Flu | Avian Influenza \(Flu\) \(cdc.gov\)](#)

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