

Foothills Health District

October 15, 2025

Foothills Health District Responds to Confirmed Avian Influenza (H5N1) in Rutherford County

RUTHERFORD COUNTY, N.C. — The Foothills Health District (FHD) has been working closely with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) following confirmation of H5N1 Avian Influenza, commonly known as “bird flu,” in a backyard flock in Rutherford County.

After receiving notification of the flock’s illness and subsequent confirmation of H5N1, the Foothills Health District met with NCDHHS on October 15 to review recommendations and coordinate next steps in the local response.

As part of standard public health protocol, FHD was contacted by NCDHHS to assist with monitoring household members who may have been in contact with the affected birds. Foothills Health District staff have been in communication with the family, and **no health concerns have been identified at this time**. Monitoring will continue throughout the designated observation period as a precautionary measure.

Avian influenza primarily affects birds, though on rare occasions it can infect humans or other animals through direct contact with infected birds or their secretions. The current risk to the general public remains low; however, residents are encouraged to use caution around sick or dead birds and to report unusual bird deaths to appropriate authorities.



Foothills Health District

Protecting Yourself and Your Family

The Foothills Health District encourages residents to take the following precautions:

- Avoid direct contact with sick or dead wild birds, poultry, or other animals. Observe them only from a distance.
- If handling potentially infected birds or animals is necessary, wear protective equipment (mask, gloves, and eye protection).
- Dispose of dead birds using gloves and double-bag them before placing in the trash.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after any contact with birds or outdoor animal environments.
- Cook all poultry, eggs, and game meat to an internal temperature of 165°F.
- Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and products made from it.
- Regularly clean bird feeders and baths with bleach and avoid placing them near backyard poultry.

If you develop symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, red eyes, or other flu-like symptoms within 10 days of contact with a sick bird or animal, contact your healthcare provider or local health department immediately. In emergencies, call 911.

Reports of sick or dead wildlife can be made to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission Helpline at 1-866-318-2401 (Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.) or by email at HWI@ncwildlife.org.

Contact:

Megan Rollins, Public Information Officer
Foothills Health District
mrollins@foothillshd.org | 828-287-6042

