

Communication 048/2025

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Avian influenza (H5N1): Human infection not expected through consumption of food

Cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (bird flu, often referred to as avian influenza) have been detected in wild birds and poultry in Germany, mainly caused by an influenza virus of the subtype H5N1. According to current scientific knowledge, transmission of the pathogen to humans via food is not expected.

Transmission of avian influenza viruses from birds to humans is rare, and direct and close contact with infected poultry appears to be the main route of transmission. Influenza viruses can cause respiratory diseases in humans and are mainly transmitted through the air via droplet infection.

There is currently no scientific evidence of avian influenza viruses being transmitted via contaminated food.

Compliance with hygiene rules should always be ensured when handling and preparing raw poultry meat and poultry meat products, also with regard to other pathogens that may be present.

The following general hygiene rules apply:

- Store and prepare raw poultry products and other food separately, especially if the latter are not reheated.
- Thoroughly clean utensils and surfaces that have come into contact with raw poultry products with warm water and detergent.
- Dispose of packaging materials, defrosting water and similar items immediately.
- Wash hands with warm water and soap.
- Cook poultry dishes thoroughly. This means that a temperature of 70 °C must be reached in all areas, including the core, for at least 2 minutes.
- In the case of eggs and egg products, as a precautionary measure you can protect yourself against possibly present pathogens by refraining from eating raw egg products (whipped egg whites, tiramisu, etc.) and ensuring that both the egg white and yolk are firm when eating boiled eggs.

Further information on the BfR website on bird flu

Questions and answers

<https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/service/frequently-asked-questions/topic/selected-questions-and-answers-relating-to-hygiene-of-food-and-consumables-in-times-of-the-bird-flu-how-can-i-protect-myself-and-my-family/>

Avian influenza topic page

<https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/food-safety/assessment-of-microbial-risks-in-foods/viruses/avian-influenza/>

Further information on avian influenza can be found on the websites of the Friedrich Loeffler Institute (www.fli.de), the Robert Koch Institute (www.rki.de) and the Federal Ministry of Food, Nutrition and Rural Affairs (www.bmleh.de).

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