

Prince William County Animal Services Bureau

12 March at 10:22

Community Alert: Cats and Avian Influenza!

We want to raise awareness about a concerning health issue affecting cats. Several states in the U.S. have reported confirmed cases of Avian Influenza, also referred to as H5N1, among their feline populations. Both indoor and outdoor cats are now considered to be at risk of exposure to H5N1. Symptoms in cats are similar to many other respiratory viruses, and may include coughing, sneezing, and nasal discharge. Unlike a typical virus, however, neurologic symptoms may also present, including lethargy, circling, tremors, and seizures.

The H5N1 virus is passed via infected bodily secretions, such as saliva, mucus, feces, urine, and milk (dairy cattle), by direct contact with infected animals, or by exposure to a contaminated environment. Wild birds, ducks, geese, and poultry are the natural host species of the infection. However, recent information indicates that a large variety of mammals are able to become infected - aside from cats, infection has been found in rodents, marine mammals, squirrels, raccoons, skunks, opossums, weasels, rabbits, bears, coyotes, and foxes. Owners of cats with outdoor access are encouraged to limit their pet's access to any source of food that could become contaminated. If you notice any unusual respiratory and/or neurologic symptoms in your cat, please consult your veterinarian immediately. If you come across any wildlife, or unknown cat, who appears to be ill or injured, please do not touch the animal, but contact 703.792.6500 to assist you.

More information is available at the following links:

<https://docs.google.com/.../2PACX.../pub>
<https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/.../h5n1-avian.../>

From another source of information, it is noted that if you feed raw diets to your animals and the food is not properly handled it can also carry H5N1.



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