

Avian Influenza and Safe Poultry Cooking

H5N1 avian influenza is a disease found in poultry and wild birds. While there have been cases of human illness reported due to H5N1, according to the World Health Organization, no evidence indicates that anyone has become infected following the consumption of properly cooked poultry or poultry products, even when these foods were contaminated with the H5N1 virus.

Poultry (such as chicken, duck, turkey, and pheasant) and poultry products (such as eggs and foods made from eggs) will be safe to eat if good hygienic practices and proper cooking methods are used. The following safety steps should always be taken when handling and cooking fowl and egg products to protect consumers from avian influenza and other foodborne illnesses, such as salmonella.

- All parts of the chicken (or other fowl) need to be fully cooked to a temperature of 165°F (with no “pink” parts) – this temperature will kill the H5N1 virus as well as other illnesses.
- Make sure eggs are fully cooked so that the yolks are not runny or liquid.
- Keep raw meat separate from cooked or ready-to-eat foods, such as lettuce or fruit. Do not use the same knife, utensils, or cutting board for raw meat and ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water in between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods.
- Never place cooked meat back on the plate or surface it was on before cooking.
- Soft-boiled or raw eggs should not be used in food that will not be cooked.
- Clean and thoroughly wash hands with soap and warm water after handling frozen or raw poultry and eggs.
- Thoroughly clean all surfaces and utensils that have been in contact with raw meat and eggs before using them again. Wash cutting boards with hot, soapy water, then sanitize with a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach mixed into 1 quart of water.

For specific concerns about avian flu and safe food handling, call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Food Protection Section at 603-271-4589 or 800-852-3345 x4589. For further information, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov or the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services website at www.dhhs.nh.gov.