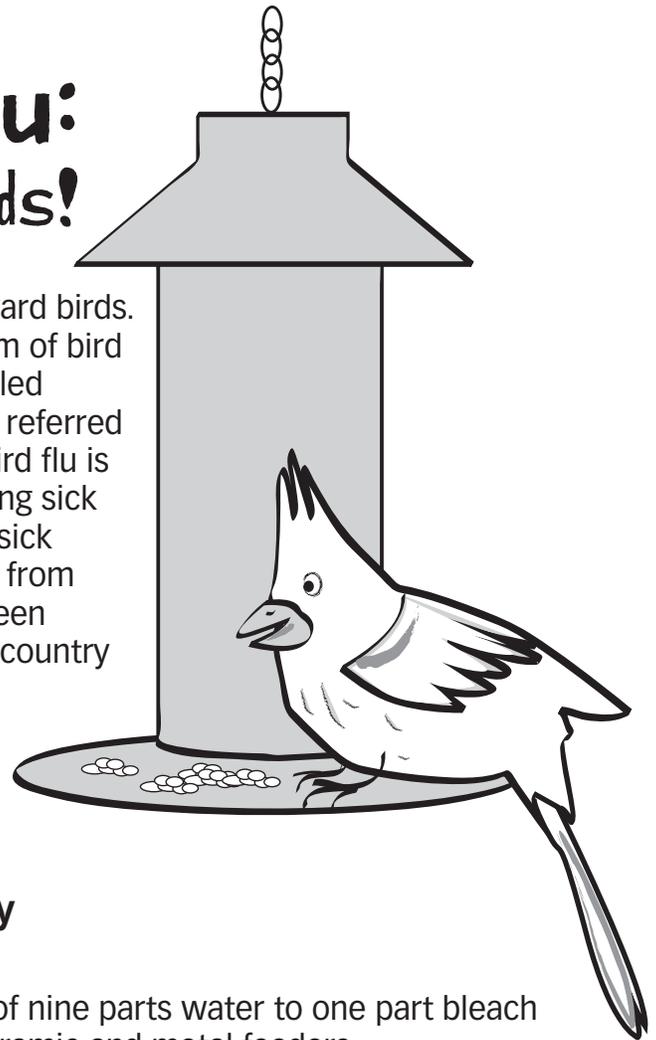


# Bird Flu and You: It's Okay to Feed the Birds!

Some people may wonder if it is safe to feed backyard birds. That's because they have heard about a severe form of bird flu that causes many bird deaths. This bird flu is called "Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1." It is also referred to as HPAI H5N1. In parts of the world where this bird flu is present, some people have gotten sick after touching sick or dead birds with bare hands. Others have gotten sick who live in areas where there are lots of droppings from sick birds. Right now, this form of bird flu has not been found in the United States. But it may come to this country sometime in the future.

It's important to know that this bird flu is hard for people to catch. It does not easily infect people. So if you enjoy feeding backyard birds, go ahead.



## **Clean and disinfect bird feeders regularly and wash your hands afterward.**

- Clean bird feeders every month with a solution of nine parts water to one part bleach to help get rid of bacteria and mold in plastic, ceramic and metal feeders.
- For wooden bird feeders, use a solution of three parts water to one part vinegar or plain, biodegradable soap.
- Sweep up and throw away droppings and hulls from around the base of the feeders.

## **Clean your bird bath regularly and wash your hands afterward.**

- Change the water every two to three days to avoid algae buildup and stop mosquitoes from breeding.
- Mosquitoes can infect people with another illness, the West Nile virus.
- Sweep up and throw away droppings from around the base of the bird bath.

## **Do not touch any backyard birds with your bare hands.**

- Backyard birds, although they might appear friendly, are wild birds. Wild birds can carry germs that might make you sick.
- A bird can look fine and still be sick.
- If you **MUST** handle a sick or dead bird, wear gloves and wash your hands afterward.



**H5N1 Avian Influenza**

To learn more about bird flu, visit [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov)