



## ARTICLE SUBMITTED

**Date:** 2/8/08

**Pages:** 2

**Contact:** Christy Martin, Public Information Officer  
CGAPS—Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species  
Ph: (808) 722-0995  
Email: [christym@rocketmail.com](mailto:christym@rocketmail.com)

---

### **“Got Dead Bird?” An unusual request for help**

If you're looking for an unusual way to give back to your community, consider dead birds. Reporting them for disease testing, that is. The Hawaii Department of Health, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and KISC are asking for everyone's help in the early detection of two diseases – West Nile Virus and bird flu (avian influenza). These two diseases are not yet present in Hawaii, but they could arrive. If either disease were to arrive, experts believe that the health of local birds would be affected. Since both diseases can sicken and kill birds, Hawaii's birds can serve as a sentinel for either disease, the proverbial canary in the coalmine.

Finding a dead bird could mean that West Nile Virus or bird flu is present. Anyone finding a dead bird that is fairly fresh (not decomposed), and not flattened (a run-over flat bird is not testable) is asked to call 211 to report it for testing, or report it online at [www.gotdeadbird.com](http://www.gotdeadbird.com).

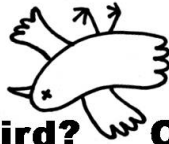
The toll-free 211 number may be dialed direct from any island and most cell phones, and it is answered by Aloha United Way operators. The operators will make sure the bird is appropriate for testing, and will send trained agency staff to pick up the bird and deliver it to the Hawaii Department of Health State Laboratory for disease testing.

West Nile Virus is a disease that spreads to people, birds and other animals when mosquitoes bite infected birds. West Nile Virus was introduced to New York in 1999, and has spread across the U.S., Canada and Mexico with migrating birds. To date, Alaska and Hawaii are the two states that do not have the virus, and Hawaii officials are working to prevent the disease from arriving here. Since 1999, West Nile Virus has killed 967 people, and sickened more than 24,000 in the U.S. The virus has also caused some populations of birds such as crows to decline as much as 45%. Should the West Nile Virus arrive and become established in Hawaii, human illnesses can be expected and possibly some deaths, along with the possible extinction of many of our remaining native birds.

Bird flu is a virus that usually affects birds and can be passed from bird-to-bird, much like our human flu virus is passed from person to person. Bird flu is highly contagious between birds,

and has caused millions of deaths in wild and domestic birds in areas where the virus has spread. So far, areas where the virus has been found include Asia, parts of Europe, Africa, and the Near East. Although it is rare for people to catch bird flu, there have been roughly 200 cases to date, most cases were caused when people came into direct contact with excretions or fluids of infected birds, or contaminated surfaces.

Although these are two separate and different diseases, the role that we each play in protecting our communities is the same: Report dead birds to 211 or [www.gotdeadbird.org](http://www.gotdeadbird.org).



**Got Dead Bird? Call 211**  
**[www.gotdeadbird.org](http://www.gotdeadbird.org)**

(END)

\*\*\*

*Christy Martin is the Public Information Officer for the statewide Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS), a public/private partnership working to protect Hawaii from invasive species.*