

# MONTANA AVIAN INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE PROJECT

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The USDA and USDI Fish and Wildlife Service initiated a nationwide avian influenza (AI) surveillance project in 2006 in response to concern about the potential expansion of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 Asian strain to North America. Montana is a priority state in the nationwide surveillance because it borders Canada and contains both the Pacific and Central Flyways. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and USDA/APHIS/ Wildlife Services (WS) have therefore conducted AI surveillance in Montana during the last two years. Multiple sampling strategies were employed to maximize the chance of detecting HPAI H5N1. Wild and urban live and hunter-harvested bird surveillance targeted specific species spatially distributed across the state and temporally distributed across the sampling period. Environmental sampling was also spatially and temporally distributed. Mortality/morbidity samples were collected opportunistically during 2006, while mortality transects were added as a mortality/morbidity surveillance technique in 2007. Statewide surveillance was initiated in August 2006 and July 2007 and was conducted for five months each year. FWP and WS collected a total of 2200 and 1502 live and hunter-harvested bird samples during 2006 and 2007, respectively. FWP collected 65 mortality/morbidity samples in 2006 and 48 in 2007, and 120 mortality transects were conducted during 2007. WS collected 998 environmental samples in 2006 and 649 in 2007 statewide. Low pathogenic avian influenza was found in samples from both years as expected. The HPAI H5N1 Asian strain was not detected in Montana or elsewhere in North America during the 2006-2007 surveillance.