



Alaska Department of
Environmental
Conservation
Division of
Environmental Health

www.dec.state.ak.us/eh

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Alaska Department of
Fish and Game
Division of Wildlife
Conservation

www.wildlife.alaska.gov

If you find a group of
sick or dead birds,
promptly call the
Alaska Interagency
Bird Disease Hotline

(866) 527-3358

For more information
on avian influenza:
www.avianflu.alaska.gov

How to Dispose of a Dead Bird

The occurrence of more than one dead bird at a location may indicate a mortality or disease event that we need to investigate. Please promptly report sick or dead birds to the interagency bird hotline at (866) 527-3358

Many birds die each year from natural causes, accidents, and disease. We currently have particular interests in bird deaths because of active surveillance for avian influenza and West Nile Virus. Please be aware that you have no obligation to dispose of wild birds, and that it is illegal to collect and keep migratory birds or their parts. However, we know that there are many reasons why dead birds may have to be moved. This fact sheet describes the proper way to dispose of one to three dead birds and applies to both wild and domestic birds. If you have domestic birds that were diagnosed with an infectious disease including Avian Influenza, the State Veterinarian (907) 375-8200 will organize the disposal of the birds. You can refer to the fact sheet "*Disposal of Bird Carcasses Infected with Avian Influenza, Guidance for Landfills*" for an overview of the process.

Dead animals can contain disease and parasites that may be harmful to humans and pets, so use hygienic precautions. Do not touch dead birds with your bare hands or bring them indoors, and keep children and pets away. If you have disposable protective gloves, put them on, pick up the bird and put it into a plastic bag. If you don't have any disposable protective gloves, put your hand inside a plastic bag, pick up the bird with your protected hand, and then pull the open end of the bag off your hand and over the bird. Once the dead bird is in a plastic bag, you have three practical options for disposal.

Option 1 – Disposal in Household Garbage

Put on gloves or use another inverted bag as above, then put the bag containing the dead bird into the second plastic bag. You can discard disposable gloves by taking them off by turning them inside out and putting them into the second plastic bag. Tie or otherwise seal up the second bag and put it in the trashcan with your normal household garbage. Once you're done, remember to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water even if you're sure you didn't touch the bird.

Option 2 – Disposal by Burying

If groundwater is more than 10 feet deep, you can bury the carcass on your own property but not in the plastic bag. Dig a hole at least two feet deep and then, holding the bag by the corners of the closed end, let the carcass fall out of the bag into the hole. Cover the carcass with dirt and fill the hole. Put the plastic bag the bird was in into another plastic bag. If you are using disposable protective gloves, take them off by turning them inside out and put them into the same bag. Seal the bag up and dispose of it in the household trash. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water even if you didn't touch the bird or the inside of the bird bag.

Option 3 – Disposal by Burning Carcasses

If you have a burn barrel or some other device used for burning household garbage, you can burn the dead bird with your other garbage. Wait until the fire is burning well and then put the bagged carcass into the fire. Make sure the fire is large enough to completely incinerate the carcass. If you are using disposable protective gloves, take them off by turning them inside out, seal them into a plastic bag and dispose of them in household trash that won't be burned. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water even if you're sure you didn't touch the bird.

Whichever option you choose, when you're done disposing of the bird, be sure to wash any clothing that was in contact with the dead bird. If the bird died in your home or you brought the dead bird into your home, be sure to clean and disinfect your floors and any surfaces the dead bird may have touched.

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