

**ANIMAL  
RESCUE  
LEAGUE  
of BOSTON**



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## **Bird Flu and Pets – What Pet Owners Need to Know**

Bird flu is a topic that's become top of mind in Massachusetts, and the Animal Rescue League of Boston (ARL) would like to relay some important information concerning the bird flu and precautions pet owners should be taking.

While the bird flu mainly infects and spreads among wild migratory birds and domestic poultry, the Center for Disease Control states that the bird flu can spread to other animals as well – including pets, although at this point experts believe that cats are more susceptible to contracting bird flu than dogs.

ARL reminds the public that this current outbreak of bird flu should not cause panic for pet owners and urge the following tips to keep our animals as safe as possible.

1. **Keep Your Eyes Open.** If you come across any deceased or sick animal, do not approach or handle and keep your pet at a safe distance so they do not sniff or try to ingest the animal. Should you observe deceased or sick birds in an area, contact the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture Resources Division of Animal Health at 617-626-1795.
2. **Cease Raw Diets.** The Food and Drug Administration is now requiring cat and dog food companies to update their safety plans to further protect against bird flu. However, a number of cats in the U.S. have become ill and some have died due to consuming uncooked meat or unpasteurized milk. While rare, pets can contract bird flu from eating a raw diet and ARL urges pet owners to stop feeding their animal a raw diet and talk with their regular veterinarian about their pet's nutrition.

3. **What to Look For.** Symptoms of bird flu in cats include fever, lethargy, low appetite, reddened or inflamed eyes, eye or nose discharge, respiratory distress, and neurologic signs like tremors, seizures, lack of coordination or blindness. Should your cat exhibit any of these symptoms, contact your veterinarian immediately. If your cat eats a raw diet or goes outside, also be sure to mention possible bird flu exposure to ensure the medical facility takes proper precautions to limit possible infection spreading to people and other animals.

ARL will continue to monitor the situation and encourages pet owners to take precautions to help keep our companion animals safe and healthy.

#### **ABOUT THE ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF BOSTON:**

**Pets are family. This belief is at the heart of everything we do at the Animal Rescue League of Boston.** ARL is the first female-founded animal welfare organization in Massachusetts and is proud to carry on a legacy of kindness and compassion, helping more than 20,000 animals annually since 1899. Recognized for innovative, award-winning programs that go beyond sheltering, ARL addresses the root causes of the issues facing animals and the people who love them. By partnering with communities, ARL helps animals heal and thrive, keeps pets and people together, and protects animals from harm. Because there is no government funding for this important work, animals must rely on people like you to get the care they need, when they need it most, 365 days a year. For more information, visit [arlboston.org](http://arlboston.org) and follow ARL on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

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