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# Disease in Common Eiders: Avian Cholera



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## What is avian cholera?

Avian cholera is a disease caused by bacteria that can infect Common Eiders, Snow Geese, Canada Geese and Ross's Geese. Avian cholera is different from avian influenza, which is a disease caused by a virus that can affect both humans and birds. Avian influenza has not been detected in the Canadian Arctic.

## Why is avian cholera of interest now?

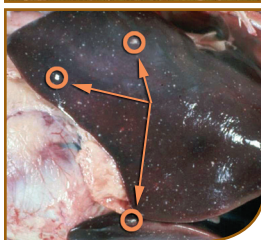
Avian cholera is capable of causing large die-offs in birds. It has occurred in the central Canadian Arctic as well as in southern Canada and the United States; however, its emergence among ducks and geese in the eastern Arctic appears to be new.

## What are we doing about it?

We are working with communities to identify diseased birds and outbreaks across the eastern Canadian Arctic. We are also collecting and examining dead birds and checking live birds, to better understand where the disease is occurring, where it came from, and what its effects are on eider populations.

## How can you recognize avian cholera?

Infected birds die quite suddenly, even while sitting on a nest. Sick birds may appear weak, unable to fly or unafraid of people. Birds dying of avian cholera are often in good body condition. Inside an affected bird, you may see bleeding on the surface of the heart and gizzard, and many small white spots on the liver.



## What precautions are necessary?

In people, the risk of disease from avian cholera is very low. However, precautions should be taken when handling any birds found sick or dead, including the down of those birds.

- Do not eat sick birds, birds with white spots on the liver, or birds that have died from unknown causes.
- While handling sick birds, dead birds or their down, wear waterproof gloves, and do not touch your face, rub your eyes, eat, drink or smoke.
- Wash your hands in warm soapy water to prevent infection through cuts and breaks in the skin, or by touching your mouth. Wash or discard the gloves.

## We need your help!

If you are aware of past die-offs of eider ducks or geese, or if you find ducks that you think have died of avian cholera or any other disease, please contact your local Hunters and Trappers Organization (Nunavut), or the Nunavik Research Centre (Nunavik), who will then contact us.



## Questions? Contact us:

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