

Is Your Cat at Risk for Bird Flu?

Recent news reports about cats and avian influenza prompt the ASPCA to answer cat owners questions.

In the wake of recent news reports about cats infected with bird flu, the experts at the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) Animal Poison Control Center have compiled information to help cat owners educate themselves about this disease. Experts say that there is no evidence that a cat has passed the disease to a human, and they offered general information about the flu.

Avian influenza is an infection caused by a virus that can cause life-threatening illness in domesticated birds, such as chickens, turkeys and ducks, the ASPCA said. The flu is spread through the saliva, feces and mucus of infected birds through direct contact with an infected bird or through contact with contaminated feed, cages or other surfaces.

Humans and some animals including tigers, leopards, ferrets, pigs and domesticated cats are susceptible to avian influenza. In all reported cases of cats infected with the disease, it is most likely that the sick cats ate an infected bird. No evidence exists to suggest that an infected cat can pass the disease to a human, the ASPCA said.

So far, the occurrence of bird flu in cats has been relatively uncommon, the ASPCA said, with only a few reports of infections in domestic cats. The most recent documented case was a cat in Northern Germany. No cases of avian influenza in cats have been reported in the United States.

For more information on cats and bird flu, visit the ASPCA website.

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