



# Avian Science Notes

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## WHY YOU DO NOT WANT THOSE LOVELY WILD WATERFOWL NEAR YOUR BIRDS

If you are a regular recipient of this newsletter, you are more likely than not a California 4-H Poultry family. As such, you live on one of the nation's four great migration routes - the Pacific Flyway. The other three are the Atlantic, the Central, and the Mississippi. Some birds that use the Pacific Flyway began their migration this August, leaving from islands off the coast of Siberia. They will reach the Klamath basin in November. Many spots in California are hospitable wintering grounds for these birds. In addition to the Klamath basin, other locations attracting millions (yes, MILLIONS) of migratory waterfowl are the Sacramento Valley, San Francisco Bay tidal marshes, and Salton Sea.

Birds moving through our flyway this fall may include birds that started their migration in Siberia or have mingled with birds from Siberia. The Russian Agricultural Ministry has confirmed the H5N1 Avian Influenza virus is present in several Siberian villages. The poultry world is very concerned over the speed with which Avian Influenza is moving across the globe.

Now to address why you should be doing everything possible to keep your birds away from migratory waterfowl. There are many types of Avian Influenza. We are especially concerned about the H5N1 type, which is deadly in chickens and turkeys. Ducks do not necessarily die from all the H5N1 viruses. Now while this may sound like a good break for the ducks, it can cause serious problems for other forms of poultry.

If ducks do not die from the virus, they can migrate to new areas. Migratory birds find themselves in very concentrated living situations. Humans do not typically experience large flu outbreaks in the summer, but in the winter. Why is that? In the summer we are outdoors, on vacation, and not closely packed in work spaces or classrooms. In the winter, we spend much more of our time indoors and often share small spaces with classmates and coworkers. When the migratory birds find themselves packed wing-to-wing on over-wintering ponds and lakes, there is great opportunity for disease spread.

In experimental situations, Mallards purposely infected with H5N1 have continued to shed the virus for 17 days. So it is possible for a migrating duck to pick up the virus, become a carrier, and shed the virus as it travels on its migratory route. You do not want such a bird to have access to your flock. On a long journey, what do you look for? I look for coffee, a good restaurant, and a gas station with clean bathrooms. Basically, I am after personal and auto fuel and I prefer to obtain them at an inviting location. Migratory waterfowl, need fuel, too, food and water. For them an inviting location is one with a pond, river, or lake. Many of you have such features on or near your property. While you cannot drain a lake to keep the waterfowl away, you can place your poultry feeders and waterers indoors, where they will not serve as flyway billboards for the waterfowl.