

Bird flu virus strain found in Maryland

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U.S. scientists say an H5N1 avian influenza virus found earlier this month in Maryland is a low pathogenic subtype and poses no threat to humans.

The scientists from the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior said the virus was initially detected in fecal samples collected last month from resident wild mallard ducks in Maryland's Queen Anne's County. The same strain has been detected several times in wild birds in North America.

Genetic tests conducted at the USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories ruled out the possibility the samples carried the highly pathogenic strain of H5N1 avian influenza that is circulating in parts of Asia, Europe and Africa.

The government scientists say low pathogenic strains of avian influenza commonly occur in wild birds and typically cause only minor sickness or no noticeable signs of disease in the birds.

Low pathogenic H5N1 is very different from the more severe strains that spread rapidly and are often fatal to chickens and turkeys.

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