

Low public health risk from Avian Influenza A H5N8: health ministry

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New Delhi: A number of wild birds died in National Zoological Park and Deer Park, both situated in Delhi and Zoological Park, Gwalior in the preceding two weeks. Domesticated bird deaths (ducks) were reported this week from Alappuzha District of Kerala. In all these instances, samples tested at the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases, Bhopal were found positive for Avian Influenza A H5N8.

On the public health risk of Avian Influenza A H5N8, World Health Organization has informed that “based on current knowledge, the risk of zoonotic transmission is considered low for H5N8”.

As a matter of abundant caution, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has advised the State Health Departments to use personal protective equipment by those handling dead/sick birds, keep persons exposed to the dead/sick birds under surveillance and provide them chemoprophylaxis (Oseltamivir 75 mg once daily for 10 days).

A Joint Coordination Committee in the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, with representation from Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is monitoring the situation.