

# PMP Pest Management PROFESSIONAL

## 2017

### Bird Management Guide

What your  
customers need  
to know about  
the avian flu risk

**BG 4** Help your customers understand bird flu

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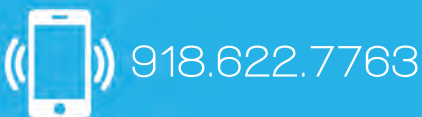


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# Help your customers understand bird flu

Extensive media coverage can lead to concerned customers. Education (and some precautions) can mitigate the scariness of it all. By Heather Gooch | Editor

**A**t press time, the avian, or bird influenza epidemic of 2016-17 hasn't reached North American shores on a large scale. But various strains of the virus are devastating parts of Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and the World Health Organization (WHO) reports the transmission risk factor is serious. Nearly 40 countries have reported new outbreaks in poultry and wild birds. In some instances, it's led to large-scale slaughters of poultry — and in China, several human deaths also have occurred.

This year's viruses include H5N6, created by gene-swapping among four different viruses, and H7N7, which has shown a sudden and steep increase of human cases since December, according to a report by Dr. Margaret Chan, director-general of WHO. While most

countries are better equipped to fight the pandemic than they were during the H1N1 virus outbreak of 2009-10, the causes and spread of the viruses still are not fully understood. In fact, a new avian flu is the No. 1 fear of biological security experts, who know flu causes regular pandemics among people, sometimes killing millions in months, according to NBC.

In December, the H7N2 strain of the virus infected 45 cats in a Manhattan animal shelter. Humans and dogs at the shelter weren't affected by the respiratory virus, and only one cat, which was elderly, died. The outbreak was mild, experts say, and while the originating source remains unknown (the strain is associated with chickens), it seems it was contained to the shelter.

In January, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) confirmed that a wild mallard duck in

## Was the 1918 flu pandemic caused by birds?

The 1918 influenza pandemic, commonly referred to as the Spanish flu, sprang from North American domestic and wild birds, according to a University of Arizona study published in *Nature* magazine in 2014. The flu virus was thought to have mutated to pigs, and from there, transmitted to humans. Other studies find that the virus has "shared ancestry" with an equine virus. The fact that horses and mules were a part of everyday life at the time could account for the rapid spread throughout the world. But nearly every study points to avian flu as a factor.

Experts tend to agree that the virus was a mutated form of the H1N1 strain of avian flu, although there's no way to be 100 percent certain. The pandemic is commonly thought to have started in Fort Riley, Kan. Because of World War I, and the widespread distribution among soldiers and sailors in close quarters and humid environments, the virus spread quickly and steadily worldwide from January 1918 until December 1920.

The virus, which affected about 500 million people worldwide, was responsible for the deaths of an estimated 50 million to 100 million (3 percent to 5 percent) of the world's population. It is said to have killed more in one year (1918) than the Black Plague killed in a century. In the United States alone, about 28 percent of the population was infected, with a mortality rate of about 15 percent. Scarier still, the hardest-hit population segment was healthy adults between the ages of 20 and 40 — unusual when compared to typical viruses striking infants, the elderly and the immunocompromised at a higher rate.

Studies also have traced the origins of two other pandemics — the Asian flu in 1957 and the Hong Kong flu in 1968 — to an avian influenza virus.



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Montana died from H5N2. This particular strain of bird flu affected farms in 15 states in 2015, leading to an estimated \$3.3 billion loss because of the culling of more than 42 million poultry. At press time, researchers are testing thousands of waterfowl to ensure other cases aren't populating. So far, the case seems to be isolated.

"This is a mystery we don't have answers to, but it's telling us the avian influenza virus is capable of adapting to all sorts of situations," said Dr. David Morens, a senior advisor at the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, in a January interview with the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP).

Dr. Morens also noted that the 2015 epidemic was more likely because of human actions, rather than waterfowl spreading the virus to chickens. Mindful of that, the USDA has recommended the "Danish Entry" system, in which each person entering a farm sits at a bench in an entryway to change shoes and clothes. The process provides a physical barrier to outside pathogens.

"Agricultural workers need to recognize the clinical signs faster, but everyone has a role in halting avian flu, whether it's the UPS driver who stops by the farm or the worker taking care of the birds on a daily basis," Steve Olson, executive director of the Minnesota Turkey Growers Association, told CIDRAP.

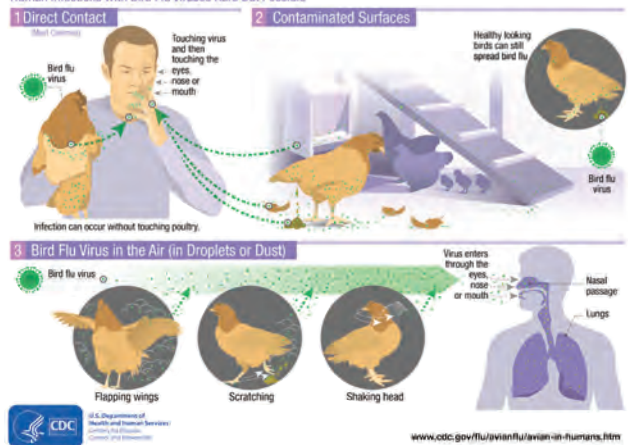
## THE PMP'S ROLE

Pest management professionals (PMPs) have known to take precautions when dealing with birds for various potential diseases, including histoplasmosis, salmonella, fungal meningitis, toxoplasmosis and paratyphoid. Wearing masks, long sleeves and gloves when cleaning up droppings and disposing of carcasses, for example, help protect against such diseases.

"While human cases of avian flu are extremely rare, they *have* occurred," reminds Dr. Jim Fredericks, chief entomologist for the National Pest Management Association (NPMA) and a *PMP* columnist. "Aquatic birds, including gulls and waterfowl like ducks, geese and swans, are considered potential reservoirs, as are chickens. If it's necessary to handle sick or dead birds, gloves should be worn. When removing bird droppings of any species, PMPs should practice proper precautions such as disinfecting surfaces and wearing gloves and respiratory protection to avoid infection with avian flu or other diseases, such as histoplasmosis or cryptococcosis."

For some customers who are learning about bird flu online, on TV or in the newspaper, it can be frightening. Compound this with the trend for suburban homeowners to keep a couple chickens in a pen for egg production or

### How Infected Backyard Poultry Could Spread Bird Flu to People Human Infections with Bird Flu Viruses Rare But Possible



## Recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

- Avoid wild birds, and observe them only from a distance. Avoid contact with domestic birds (poultry) that appear ill or have died. Avoid contact with surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from wild or domestic birds.
- People who have had contact with infected bird(s) should monitor their own health for possible symptoms — conjunctivitis ("pink eye") or flu-like symptoms, for example.
- People who have had contact with infected birds might also be given influenza antiviral drugs preventively.
- Healthcare providers evaluating patients with possible HPAI H5 infection should notify their local or state health departments, which, in turn, should notify CDC. CDC is providing case-by-case guidance at this time.
- There's no evidence any human cases of avian influenza have ever been acquired by eating properly cooked poultry products.
- CDC will update the public as new information becomes available.

feed wild ducks attracted to a backyard water feature, and it's worth familiarizing yourself and your team about its prevention — and reassuring them of the minimal risk.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) recommends avoiding sources of exposure whenever possible.

"We don't receive many questions about it, but when we do, we simply tell them it's mainly related to poultry overseas, and that bird-to-human contamination has been extremely rare thus far," notes Rodney Beaman, president of Texas Bird Services and Fort Worth Pest & Termite Services. "Then we direct them to the CDC's website for more info. We also use precautions and recommend precautions working around any feces from any bird." PMP

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# Birds, birds and more birds

Nuisance Wildlife Removal shares how bird work comprises nearly a third of its revenue.

By Jerry Mix | Editor At-Large

**B**ird management can be time-consuming, complex work. Sure, it's relatively easy to remove sparrows and their nests from big box store signs. But when the Tampa Bay Buccaneers want osprey and their nest removed from a 125-ft.-tall light pole at Raymond James Stadium, the degree of difficulty moves up a few notches.

Christy Norris, co-owner of Palmetto, Fla.-based Nuisance Wildlife Removal, has seen her share of challenging situations during her 17 years in the industry. Although rodents account for the majority of the company's work, birds are second at 30 percent.

Nuisance Wildlife Removal, a fully licensed pest management company, does mainly general pest work — limited to bees, wasps and mosquitoes. It's for good reason: Nearly 70 percent of its work is a result of referrals from other pest management companies.

"We don't bite the hand that feeds us," Norris quips. "We also get referrals from power washing



companies. They clean pool cages, for example, but they don't want to be there every other week removing bird droppings."

**An osprey nest on the top of traditional stadium lights can be a fire hazard.**

Referrals also come from sign companies, because sparrows are notorious for building nests on signs. Nuisance Wildlife Removal focuses both on getting rid of the bird problem and how to prevent it from reoccurring.

"We do standard residential and commercial bird control, and that can be as small as controlling pigeons and sparrows," Norris says. "They are not protected birds, so we don't need to get permits. We can put up deterrents, such as spikes, electrical shock tracks and netting."

The company also performs bird work that involves protected species such as grackles, osprey, eagles, woodpeckers and hawks. Its crew is used to the legwork involved in pulling the proper permits. As for control measures, Norris says, the crew uses a variety of deterrents to keep these birds away.

### OH, THOSE OSPREYS

At the aforementioned stadium, the osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*, also known as fish hawks) became a significant problem because its lights would become so hot, they'd light the birds' nesting material on fire,

CONTINUED ON PAGE BG12



An osprey nest is built on the back of a highway sign.

PHOTOS: CHRISTY NORRIS



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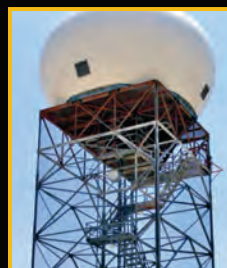


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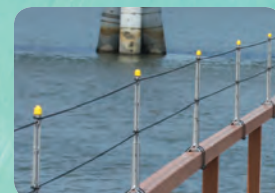
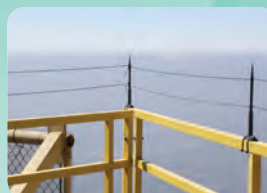
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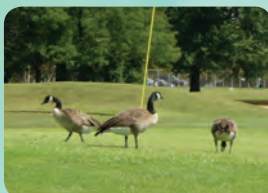
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE BG8

which would drop into the stadium seats. To solve this problem, “the RayJay” is switching to LED lighting.

On a much smaller scale, Nuisance Wildlife Removal recently dealt with an osprey building a nest on the top of a residential chimney.

“In this case, we had to fly a drone to look at the nest,” Norris says. “We had to make sure it was not an active nest, because you can’t touch an active nest.”

Had it been active, Florida law would have required Nuisance Wildlife Removal to build a platform to the state’s specifications so the osprey could continue nesting. The nesting platform would have to be within 300 yds. of the nest that had been removed.



Peafowl infested the entire town of Long Boat Key, Fla.

## PEACOCK PROBLEMS

Nuisance Wildlife Removal deals with exotic birds as well. The town of Long Boat Key, Fla., asked the company to chase out dozens of peafowl because they scratch cars, are very loud and (obviously) don’t clean up after themselves. Norris says her crew live-trapped the birds and took them to refuges.

“They certainly don’t stand up for roll call, but originally there were

60 peacocks on Long Boat,” she says. “Some people wanted them in the town, while others would have preferred that they all go away. The town hired us to take care of the problem because the birds had gotten so out of hand.”

As a compromise, Norris says, today a mere 11 pesky peafowl reside on Long Boat Key. PMP

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## DON'T WALK AWAY FROM BIRD PROJECTS

“Don’t turn away bird work,” advises Christy Norris, co-owner of Nuisance Wildlife Removal, Palmetto, Fla. “All of the suppliers put on great educational seminars. They will teach you how to do bird work, and they will also give you product samples so you can show your customers what you are going to do.”

Norris says most suppliers also will help you measure the work if you have a big job, such as a condo or parking garage.

“A lot of suppliers are just a phone call away,” she adds, noting that it’s always a good idea to run a plan by them if you have even an inkling of doubt. “If you ‘think’ it will work, but it won’t actually work, they will help you figure out a different strategy.” — JM



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# Making 'em fly away

Rodney Beaman brings practical knowledge to his business when controlling grackles, pigeons and Mexican free-tailed bats.

By Jerry Mix | Editor-at-Large

“I’m definitely passionate about bird work,” says Rodney Beaman, who recently took a long look at this expanding field for *Pest Management Professional* magazine. “It’s really interesting to me.”

After launching Fort Worth Pest & Termite Services in 1998, it soon became apparent to him that his Arlington, Texas-based company was doing a lot of bird control work. So Beaman decided to spin off the bird jobs into Texas Bird Services and operate them as separate companies.

“The bird side of the company is now much bigger than the pest side,” he admits, noting bat work also goes into the winged pest company mix.

Beaman has been doing bird work for nearly 30 years, and for the past six years, Texas Bird Services has been growing at a rate of nearly 30 percent annually.

It services not only the Lone Star state, but accounts in Oklahoma, New Mexico, Wyoming, Idaho, Tennessee, Indiana and Pennsylvania.



“Most of my bird knowledge has come from field experience,” he says. “Unfortunately, not a lot of people are educated on bird biology, but I acquired knowledge on how to keep birds out of structures.”

Beaman does little advertising, so his growth has come mostly by word-of-mouth. Its only other marketing outlets are its website and a mailable brochure.

Currently, Texas Bird Services is comprised of three divisions:

**1 MIGRATORY BIRD WORK.** “We have contracts with cities and downtown improvement districts where we move migratory birds from their trees,” Beaman says, referring to species ranging from Canada geese to starlings to grackles. “Here in Texas, we are in a migratory flyway zone, where all the migratory birds pass through North and Central Texas on their way south.”

Beaman says thousands of birds will stop and roost in trees along their way.

“We use 20 to 40 people, depending on the season, to keep those birds from landing in the trees for our customers,” he explains, noting the team uses high-powered lasers. “We shoot the lasers into the trees, which confuses the birds and they move on.”

The team achieves the greatest success just before sundown, Beaman says, because that’s when the majority of the birds move into the trees all at once. Texas Bird Services does this type of work in big metropolitan downtown areas, as well as at a number of large college and corporate campuses.



Grackle droppings are both unsightly and a health hazard on a residential street.



## 3 TIPS FOR BIG BIRD JOBS

Rodney Beaman has advice about taking on large bird control projects, for his fellow pest management professionals (PMPs):

**1 DON'T OVEREXTEND YOURSELF FINANCIALLY.** "There is often a lot of liability and the need for a lot of starting capital before launching a large bird project," says Beaman, owner of Arlington-based Texas Bird Services. "If you are undertaking a \$500,000 bird control project, it's probably going to be a while before you will be paid, so you will have to front the money for the necessary products — including the high-reach equipment — to do the job. I can't tell you the number of times we have come in where another company has started a job, but was unable to complete it because it ran out of funding."

**2 CONSIDER SUBCONTRACTING WITH OTHER FIRMS.** "We started letting smaller companies know we don't mind subcontracting," Beaman says. "We now subcontract for about 15 companies, and they get a percentage of the sale. Smaller companies in particular should not be shy about subcontracting this work. There is no shame in subcontracting this work to companies that specialize in it."

**3 DON'T COMMIT TO NEW PRODUCTS IN THE MARKETPLACE BEFORE TESTING THEM.** "There are some products that work, and there are others that don't," Beaman says. "Don't commit to doing jobs with new products until you are certain they work, and work long-term." — JM

"We can see when migratory birds start to move, and we know when they are going to be in Houston or Dallas, for example," he says. "If we were going to draw our own migratory bird map, it would look quite different than a university map."

**2 SINGLE-SITE ABATEMENT.** Texas Bird Services also is called out to places like power plants and landfills, where the company will employ a technician to stay at the site year-round and perform bird abatement.

"We use baiting, trapping, nest removal and harvesting in instances where the birds can be legally removed," Beaman says.

The company also performs this type of work at airplane hangars, military establishments and transportation facilities.

**3 STATIONARY BIRD MANAGEMENT.** This is Texas Bird Services' biggest division, and uses netting, spikes and electrified tracks to control birds that are more stationary, such as pigeons and sparrows.

"On some projects, it's more about construction than bird work," Beaman says. "We are there like plumbers or electricians, in that we have to have some of the same safety gear and the same [U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or] OSHA training. We go through all of the requirements other trades go through, but they are putting up lights, for example, while we are putting up bird netting."

For certain aspects of its bird management, Texas Bird Services uses a wide variety of high-reach equipment. All of its installers are aerial lift-certified. And while general pest work is the focus of sibling company Fort Worth Pest & Termite Services, Texas Bird Services is also licensed and regulated by the Texas Department of Agriculture for structural pest control services, so it can use pesticides to do all of its work when the need arises. PMP

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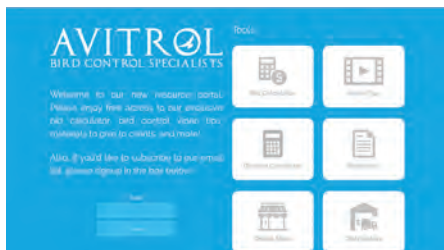
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The Bird-X Laser for Indoors and the Bird-X Laser for Outdoors deliver laser technology that scares pest birds and keeps them away. Red and green laser beams seek bird roosting spots, which alarm and confuse the pests. The beams constantly change patterns to prevent acclimation. Both laser options feature a remote control for access anywhere, and the Bird-X Laser for Outdoors includes a mounting base for easy installation.

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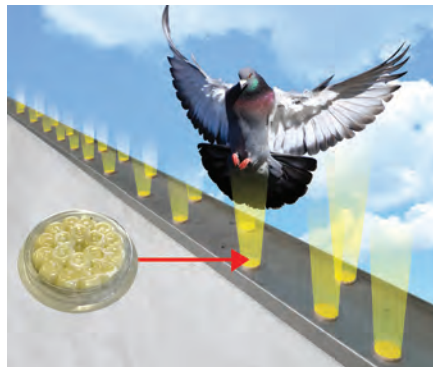
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