

Algoma University Animal Care Committee	
#AU 0013 Zoonoses (Avian Studies)	
Issue date: June 2012	Last revised: May 2025

1) Purpose

This SOP provides standardized procedures to prevent, identify, and respond to zoonotic disease risks associated with birds in a university environment. The objective is to safeguard human health while maintaining high standards of animal care, welfare, and biosafety. This SOP describes acceptable procedures for protecting yourself from potential disease due to handling birds.

This SOP applies to all faculty, staff, students and researchers who interact with birds in Algoma University Research laboratories
 Aviaries, Farms, or wildlife facilities
 Field research operations

Definitions

Zoonoses: Diseases transmissible between animals and humans.

Avian zoonoses: Diseases primarily carried or transmitted by birds to humans.

PPE: Personal Protective Equipment.

Aerosol: Tiny particles suspended in air which may contain infectious agents.

2) Policy

CCAC guidelines and regulations

3) Responsibility

Principal investigator, their research staff, and their student investigators

4) Training Required

Animal Research Ethics

Handling/training in the relevant species

Bio-methodology training in the relevant technique and species

5) Materials Required

Hand Sanitizer (Liquid or Wipes)

Disposable Gloves

Lab coats/Coveralls

Mask

Insect Repellent

Eye Protection

Disease	Causative Agent	Transmission	Human Symptoms
Psittacosis (Ornithosis)	<i>Chlamydia psittaci</i>	Inhalation of dust from feathers, droppings	Fever, chills, pneumonia
Avian Influenza	Influenza A virus (e.g., H5N1)	Aerosols, direct contact	Respiratory distress, fever
Salmonellosis	<i>Salmonella</i> spp.	Fecal-oral route	Diarrhea, abdominal pain
Campylobacteriosis	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>	Fecal-oral, contaminated surfaces	Gastroenteritis
Cryptococcosis	<i>Cryptococcus neoformans</i>	Inhalation of spores from dried droppings	Lung infections, meningitis

6) Procedures

Risk

NOTE: Most avian diseases cannot be contracted by humans. However, there is always a slight risk of transmission when handling wild birds (e.g. salmonella, avian influenza). In addition, field workers should also be aware of the risks of insect transmitted diseases such as Lyme Disease (from Deer Ticks) and West-Nile Virus (from Mosquito), see SOP #AU0010 Insect Bites for more information.

Prevention/Precaution

1. Handling and Housing
2. Use the buddy system during invasive procedures or fieldwork
3. Handle Birds gently and minimize stress to reduce shedding of pathogens
4. House birds in well-ventilated enclosures and avoid overcrowding

Hygiene

1. After handling birds, clean hands with hand-sanitizer or disinfectant hand wipes while in the field.
2. When you return from the field, wash your hands with soap and water
3. Launder your clothes before wearing them again.
4. Check your body carefully for ticks, especially from May-June when they are most commonly found in Ontario.
5. Wear coveralls, farm-specific clothing, or laboratory coats when handling animals. Avoid handling sick animals or animals with lesions unless gloved.
6. Avoid eating, drinking, or touching the face during bird related tasks
7. Use dedicated footwear and clothing in bird housing areas

Emergency Procedure:

1. Bites or Scratches: Wash the area with soap and water, report to supervisor
2. Aerosol/dropping exposure: Leave the area, wash exposed skin, and report immediately
3. Incident Reporting: Complete an Incident/Hazard Reporting Form and notify the department of Life, Health & Safety and Security Team

Medical attention should be sought for any illness that cannot be easily explained or is persistent (e.g. extreme and persistent fatigue). Medical professionals should then be made aware that the researcher spends time regularly in the field and also handles birds so that non-traditional diagnoses can be considered.

REVISION HISTORY		
Revision #	Revision Date	Summary of Changes
1	November 2019	Modified
2	May 2024	Additional revision by Algoma H&S Office
3	May 2025	Reformatting
4	May 2025	Department of Life, Health & Safety and Security, reviewed and provided comments and additions to SOP.