

Reporting Dead Bird Sightings

The Cape May County Department of Health, along with the Cape May County Department of Mosquito Control, accepts reports of dead birds. Birds of interest include crows and blue jays. Only a sample of dead crows and blue jays that meet specific criteria will be picked up and tested for the West Nile virus. However, your report of a dead bird is extremely important because dead bird reports allow the Department of Mosquito Control to better target control efforts.

Dead bird sightings can be reported to the Department of Health by calling 609-465-1209 Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. After-hour sightings should be reported the following day and weekend sightings should be reported the following Monday.

There is currently no evidence that West Nile virus can be spread directly from birds to people. However, dead birds can carry a variety of diseases and, therefore, should never be handled with bare hands.

If you wish to preserve possible bird samples, use plastic or latex gloves to carefully place the bird in a clear plastic, zip-lock bag. The bird should then be refrigerated in a cooler. Do not freeze the bird. If the bird has been in your possession for longer than 48 hours, dispose of the bird.

To dispose of a dead bird, use plastic or latex gloves and carefully place it in a double plastic bag. You may also use a doubled plastic bag as a glove to pick up the bird. Wrap the bird in the bag, tie it off, and place it in the outdoor trash. Wash your hands with soap and water when finished.

It is very important that birds are identified correctly for submission. Please review the bird information identifiable characteristics of the American Crow and the Blue Jay.

American Crow (Common crow)

Length from tip of the bill to tip of the tail: 17 inches



Entirely black plumage and eyes

Short, squared-off tail

Purplish gleam in strong sunlight

Bill and feet strong and black

Bristles over nostrils

Blue Jay

Length from tip of the bill to tip of the tail: 11 inches



Black sturdy bill and dark legs

Blue crest and upperparts

Black eyeline and breastband

Grayish-white throat and underparts

Bright blue wings with black bars and white patches

Long blue tail with black bars and white corners