

# Bird flu kills 700 black vultures, closes animal sanctuary

August 23 2022

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[Bird flu](#) has killed hundreds of wild black vultures at a Georgia sanctuary that houses more than 1,500 other animals.

No other [birds](#) at Noah's Ark have tested positive for or shown symptoms of the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain, sanctuary officials told news outlets.

An outbreak of the virus has led to the deaths of 40 million chickens and turkeys and about 2,000 [wild birds](#) this year. The [wild birds](#) include more than 240 black vultures and nearly 220 [bald eagles](#), according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Even seals have died from it.

Officials said they were told Saturday that initial tests indicate the black vultures that roost at Noah's Ark died of the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain. State authorities were notified when an unusual number of dead vultures were found Aug. 13, according to a statement released to news outlets.

At least 700 black vultures have died, Noah's Ark animal care manager Allison Hedgecoth [told WXIA-TV](#). State workers euthanized 20 to 30 other birds, she said.

"All of our chickens were euthanized yesterday and our turkeys and our guinea hens," she said.

The station reported that the sanctuary is home to more than 500 birds.

Those include an ostrich, emus, a peacock, two sandhill cranes, cockatoos, and a Eurasian eagle owl, according to the sanctuary's website.

Noah's Ark is in Locust Grove, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) miles southeast of Atlanta. It's more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) northwest of the area where hundreds of birds in a mixed backyard flock died or were euthanized earlier this year and most of the previously reported 15 wild bird deaths from the virus were located.

A sign on the Noah's Ark website said it will be closed through Sept. 3.

Georgia's Department of Agriculture and Department of Natural Resources set up a six-mile (9.6 kilometer) perimeter around the [sanctuary](#) in hope of containing the spread, according to WXIA.

"With birds that are able to move around and airborne, this disease could spread pretty rapidly if it's not contained very quickly," state Sen. Emanuel Jones, whose district covers Henry County, told the station.

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