

Bird flu detected in southeast Alaska black bear cub

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A black bear cub in southeast Alaska was euthanized after it became ill with avian influenza, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game said.

It is believed that the cub, which was located in Bartlett Cove in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve west of Juneau, is the second bear diagnosed with the highly pathogenic bird flu, the [Juneau Empire](#) reported.

Bird flu "passes really easily to poultry, but mammals aren't really susceptible to it," said Dr. Kimberlee Beckmen, a wildlife veterinarian for the department. "It's difficult to get, but we suspect the cub probably ate a bird that died from [avian influenza](#)."

The bear likely became ill because it was a small, young animal with a weak immune system, she said.

Since the virus was first detected in an adult female black bear in Canada in June, Alaska state officials have tested scavenging animals for it. So far, it's only been found in two other animals, both [red foxes](#) in Dutch Harbor and the western Alaska community of Unalakleet.

Finding bird flu in the bear and foxes is not an indication it's likely to spread to other animals or to people, Beckmen said.

"This particular strain, people are pretty much immune to it," she said.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said this strain of bird flu poses a "very low" risk to humans, and only one person in the U.S. has been diagnosed in this outbreak.

However, the flu has hammered the state's wild bird population.

People in Glacier Bay last month noticed that the cub, one of three accompanying a sow, had difficulty walking, according to state wildlife officials.

The sow abandoned the cub and a biologist picked it up. However, it began suffering seizures, as did the Canadian bear previously diagnosed with the illness. The Alaska bear was euthanized by a state biologist. Later testing confirmed the presence of the virus that causes highly [pathogenic avian influenza](#).

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