

**Bird Flu: Hoax or the Next Pandemic?**

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Covid-19 changed the world, but the bird flu has the potential to be just as bad if not worse. Andy Morris-Friedman (2024) presents a satirical, controversial viewpoint on the current bird flu outbreak. In his article, he mocks those who dismiss the bird flu as an overblown hoax, using exaggerated humor to highlight their flawed reasoning. Although Morris-Friedman is a little over the top in his writing, I agree with him, and he does bring up some clear misunderstandings that some people may have about the bird flu. I think the bird flu should be taken seriously because it has an alarmingly high death rate for humans, the potential to evolve into another global pandemic, and continues to mutate to infect other animals. This topic is important because humans and birds are very interconnected, and I don't want the world to go through another preventable pandemic, like Covid-19.

Morris-Friedman (2024) writes, "Two million chickens are killed due to bird flu and they act like the sky is falling, but each year in the U.S. 8 billion chickens are killed for food." He highlights the argument that the bird flu is not serious because far more chickens are slaughtered for consumption. Although the number of birds that have died from bird flu is less than the amount we use for food, people with this perspective don't understand the true scale of the outbreak. Although there may have been minimal bird deaths at one point, the number has been continually increasing. CBS reporter Martha Teichner (2025) claims that "since the current strain of bird flu, H5N1, reached the United States in 2022, over 148 million birds have been ordered euthanized." That is a shocking amount of over one hundred million birds in just over two years. Some people might not think much of the impact of the bird flu because it is primarily affecting animals. Another example that shows the severity of the bird flu is that on farms, if one bird tests positive, they are all assumed to be exposed and must be killed. In one of their avian influenza FAQ articles, the National Chicken Council (2023) claim that in the U.S., all bird flocks undergo

year-round testing for avian influenza and even if just one bird tests positive, none of them are allowed to enter the food supply as well. While this may seem like an extreme response to some people, I think it is unfortunately the best option to prevent the spread of the virus. Although it stops the spread of the virus, it doesn't address the often-inhumane ways that they are using to kill the birds. According to Josh Funk (2022), there are two main ways that birds are killed when the bird flu strikes a farm. One way is by a foam and the other is by using a gas. Both ways have the same result of suffocating the birds. This is not without pain and discomfort for the birds. In my opinion, causing the birds extreme suffering is not humane. If farmers have to euthanize all of their chickens just because one chicken tests positive, that just goes to show how much of a threat this virus can be.

Morris-Friedman mocks those who dismiss bird flu by writing "First it was Covid, now bird flu. In the pecking order of impending crises, why are they crowing about what I call the "cluck flu?" I don't care, I'm not a bird." Through his jokes, he mocks those who do not take the bird flu seriously just because it doesn't directly affect them. The reality is that the bird flu is already infecting other animals, and it continues to mutate. Although currently there is no evidence of human-to-human transmission, the virus could mutate to do so in the future. In an article from Laboratory Equipment (2025) Texas Biomed professor Luis Martinez-Sobrido, who specializes in influenza, emphasizes "The clock is ticking for the virus to evolve to more easily infect and potentially transmit from human to human, which would be a concern," This shows that the bird flu has the potential to turn into something that could affect everyone, not just the birds. I personally think that people who ignore these risks repeat the same mistakes that happened with Covid-19. Before Covid-19 became a pandemic, there were many warnings, yet

many people didn't take them seriously until it was too late. We have also learned from the Covid-19 virus how quickly viruses can replicate and mutate.

Morris-Friedman also expresses the viewpoint of people who think this is just another Covid-19 scenario where the government overhyped the severity of it. I think those who downplay the bird flu as just another government-manufactured virus don't understand how serious it is. Since January 2003, the World Health Organization (2025) has been tracking reported human cases and deaths caused by bird flu. Globally, the death percentage is 49% with 954 reported cases and 464 deaths. Any virus that has a 49% death rate needs to be taken seriously, which is why I think it should be a concern for everyone. If the bird flu mutates to become more contagious to humans, we could possibly have another worldwide pandemic just as deadly if not more deadly than Covid-19. Of course this is all dependent on how the virus mutates, but I think that the public needs to be cautiously aware of the bird flu and how it spreads.

Morris-Friedman also exaggerates the idea some people might have of viruses jumping between animals. He writes "Back when America was great, chickens got chicken pox, monkeys got monkey pox and cows got cow pox. But now cows get chicken pox, people get monkey pox and monkeys get cow pox, which is udderly ridiculous." While this comment is meant to be ironic, it highlights the real issue of the bird flu's ability to infect other animals. The bird flu has continued to infect new animals as it has been mutating. The CDC (2025) confirms that bird flu viruses have been known to infect mammals that eat infected birds. Animals such as bears, foxes, skunks, cats, and dogs have all contracted the virus from consuming infected dead birds. For me, this is one of the more frightening aspects of bird flu. If the bird flu is already mutating to infect other species, it makes me wonder what is stopping it from making the jump to infect humans

more effectively. Because this virus is actively changing to infect new species, I think it is not just some overblown hoax like some people may think.

Ultimately, the bird flu is affecting many Americans, whether they choose to believe it or not. I do not think the bird flu should be dismissed as fearmongering or a hoax. Andy Morris-Friedman did a great job showcasing some of these viewpoints in his satirical article. The bird flu's high fatality rate in humans, its potential to mutate to spread more easily, and its ability to infect other animals are all reasons why this is a threat that should not be ignored. Writing this article helped me understand how misinformation can shape people's perspectives on current events. History has shown that underestimating viruses can lead to horrible consequences, seen most recently with Covid-19. Instead of ignoring past mistakes, I think we should all acknowledge the risks and form a plan in case the virus becomes a greater threat to humans.

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