Sioux Lookout
First Nations
Health Authority

COMMUNITY WELLBEING ADVISORY

To: Sioux Lookout area Chiefs and Health Directors
From: Dr. Lloyd Douglas, Public Health Physician, Approaches to Community Wellbeing (ACW), SLFNHA
Date: September 28, 2026
Re: **Flu Vaccine Recommended for Hunters and Trappers**

ISSUE

Hunting and trapping season is underway. The Ontario Ministry of Health recommends the seasonal flu vaccine for people whose work or activities may increase their contact with animals that could be infected with avian influenza (H5N1). Hunters and trappers may have more opportunities to come into contact with wild birds and other animals. This Community Wellbeing Advisory provides updated information about the issue and offers practical recommendations to help reduce the risk of avian influenza in the Sioux Lookout area First Nations communities.

WHY GET THE FLU VACCINE?

The seasonal flu vaccine is an important way to protect yourself and others during flu season. The 2026–2027 seasonal flu vaccine is expected to protect against the seasonal flu viruses that may spread this winter. It does not protect against avian influenza (H5N1). However, getting the seasonal flu vaccine reduces the spread of flu viruses (including avian flu) between people and animals. Getting your flu vaccine also can:

- help prevent the spread of flu in your community;
- reduce your risk of becoming seriously ill from seasonal flu; and
- help protect people who are at greater risk of serious complications from flu, including pregnant people and people living with chronic health conditions.

WHO SHOULD GET VACCINATED?

Flu vaccination is available free of charge in Ontario for everyone who is 6 months and older. People who hunt and trap are eligible for early access to the seasonal flu vaccine because of their potential exposure to wildlife.

Speak with your healthcare provider or local nursing station about getting your flu vaccine and other publicly funded vaccines to protect yourself, your family, and your community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Protect yourself when handling wildlife

If you handle wildlife, the following simple steps can help reduce the spread of flu:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after handling animals and before eating or drinking.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze. Throw the tissue away right after use, then wash or clean your hands.
- If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not into your hands.
- Do not share food, utensils, towels, or handkerchiefs with others.
- Keep hand sanitizer or wipes available at work, at home, and in your vehicle.

If you become sick after contact with wildlife

If you develop flu-like symptoms after handling or being in contact with an animal that appears sick, seek medical attention. Tell your healthcare provider that you have had contact with an animal showing signs of illness. This information is important when assessing your illness and determining appropriate care.

If you see sick or dead birds or other wildlife

If you see a bird or other wild animal that appears sick or is found dead, do not handle it. Contact your local nursing station or Band Office and let them know what you observed. They can contact the appropriate authorities so that the situation can be assessed and appropriate protective measures can be taken.

We thank all community workers, healthcare providers, and community members for their support in improving health and wellbeing of First Nations people in the Sioux Lookout area.

If you have any questions, please contact:

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cc: Sonia Isaac Mann, Chief Executive Officer and President

SLFNHA Board of Directors

SLFNHA Chiefs Council on Health

Community Health Directors and Physicians

Sioux Lookout area Tribal Councils

Nishnawbe Aski Nation