

10– 02 – 2024

News: Gentoo Penguins

- Recently, over 200 Gentoo penguins have been found dead in the Falkland Islands, Antarctica due to the spread of the H5N1 Avian Influenza Virus.

Gentoo Penguins

- Gentoo Penguins are characterized by a band of white feathers extending across the top of the head from just above each eye.
- Other distinguishing features include a black throat, a brush tail that is large in comparison with other penguin species, and a bill that is mostly deep orange or red.

Distribution

- They are exclusively located in the Southern Hemisphere, primarily found on the Antarctic Peninsula and numerous sub-Antarctic islands, with a notable concentration in the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic Ocean.

Habitat

- These penguins are typically situated along shorelines, allowing for quick access to food sources while staying in proximity to their nests. This strategic positioning facilitates efficient foraging and nesting activities.

Threats

- **Predators:** Vulnerable to predation by South American sea lions, Weddell seals, leopard seals, killer whales, skuas, sheathbills, caracaras, and giant fulmars.
- **Human Impact:** Historical practices such as egg collection for supplementation, and harvesting of skins and blubber.
- **Environmental Changes:** Changing environmental conditions and competition with humans for prey, potentially impact population sizes.

Conservation Status

- IUCN Red List: Least Concern (LC).

Bird Flue / Avian Influenza

- Avian influenza, known informally as **avian flu or bird flu** refers to “**influenza caused by viruses adapted to birds**”.
- Most avian influenza viruses **do not infect humans, however, some, such as A (H5N1) and A (H7N9), have caused serious infections in people.**
- There is **no vaccine against H5N1.**
- Most **avian influenza viruses do not infect humans, however some, such as A (H5N1) and A (H7N9), cross the species barrier and cause disease or subclinical infections in humans and other mammals as well.**
- The Avian (H5N1) virus subtype, a highly pathogenic virus, first infected humans in 1997 during a poultry epidemic outbreak in Hong Kong SAR, China.

Types of Influenza Viruses

- There are four types of influenza viruses: **influenza A, B, C, and D.**
- **Influenza A and B are the two types of influenza that cause epidemic seasonal infections nearly every year.**

Avian influenza Type A viruses

- Type A viruses are classified based on **two proteins on their surfaces: Hemagglutinin (HA) and Neuraminidase (NA).**
- There are about **18 HA subtypes and 11 NA subtypes.**
- **Several combinations of these two proteins are possible** e.g., H5N1, H7N2, H9N6, H17N10, H18N11 etc.
- **Influenza C mainly occurs in humans** but has been known to also occur in dogs and pigs.
- **Influenza D is found mainly in cattle. It's not known to infect or cause illness in humans yet.**