

## Type E Botulism Outbreaks Collection and Disposal of Carcasses



Photo: Toronto Star



1. Bird carcasses should not be handled with bare hands. Wear gloves or use a garbage bag over your hand to collect carcasses.
2. Individuals that are surveying beaches for bird mortality and are collecting species for submission for examination or for disposal should wear rubber, plastic or disposable gloves. Wash hands after handling.
3. The bird carcasses should be placed in garbage bags – the number of birds/bag will depend on the size of the birds and the quality of the garbage bags used. Bags should be tied and closed tightly. Any birds found bearing a band should be reported using the contact information printed on the band.
4. Carcasses can be disposed of either by including them with your household trash or by burying them. If you are burying the carcasses, you need to do so away from the shoreline, remove them from the garbage bag(s), and bury them at least 2 feet deep. Burying them to this depth will discourage other animals from unearthing them. Do not compost. Put garbage bags in the trash.
5. Property owners may bury animals on their own land. If dead birds are found on band/public lands contact the local personnel designated specifically for disposal.
6. Once you finish handling carcasses, dispose of your gloves in a garbage bag and place them in the trash to go to a landfill.

**To report dead or dying birds contact the local authority or  
the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre at 1-866-673-4781**

# Type E Botulism Frequently Asked Questions



## ***Where does botulism come from?***

Botulism spores are abundant in low-oxygen materials like soil and lake sediment. They are also found in the gills and digestive tract of fish living in those lakes. The spores are harmless until the right environmental factors occur. This would be in a nutrient-rich substrate like large amounts of decaying vegetation and dead fish (that have died of other reasons).

## ***What species are affected by Type E botulism?***

The bird species affected by botulism include loons, mergansers, long-tail ducks, grebes, cormorants and gulls. Fish species affected include freshwater drum, smallmouth bass, rock bass, round gobies, channel catfish and sturgeon.

## ***Has botulism always been in the Great Lakes?***

Botulism has been around for a long time, but records of it in the Great Lakes have only appeared recently. Since 1999, significant die-offs of birds and fish have been occurring regularly in Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.



## ***Is it safe to eat fish or waterfowl?***

If you are hunting or fishing on the Great Lakes, you should harvest only fish and waterfowl that look healthy. Do not take any that show signs of illness. Always prepare wild fish and game using proper sanitary measures.

## ***Can I swim in the water?***

You are not at risk of botulism poisoning by swimming in Great Lakes waters.

## ***Is it safe to walk dogs on the beach after a die-off?***

Yes, but just keep them away from any dead animals on the beach.

Photo: www.simcoe.com

To report *birds suspected of botulism poisoning* contact  
the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre at 1-866-673-4781  
To report *fish die-offs* contact the Ministry of Natural Resources at 1-866-929-0994