



DOWN & FEATHERS ARE SAFE

News of avian flu has been sensationalized by the world's media. However, only a tiny fraction of the world's poultry is or has ever been infected by the virus. China's avian flu rate is lower than last year.

Furthermore, the avian flu virus CANNOT survive in down and feathers that have been washed and processed. (130°C / 300°F for 20-30 minutes)

There is NO RISK for down and feather pillows comforters, jackets or sleeping bags.

The avian flu virus is a class of the influenza virus and is susceptible to heat, dryness, and chemical disinfectants. If any virus (avian flu or other) did exist in raw down and feathers, the washing, sterilizing, and drying procedures are sufficient to destroy it.

Down is first washed with a detergent to remove all dust, dirt, and organic matter. Down is then steamed at 120°-130°C for 20-30 minutes. The avian flu virus can survive only 2-3 minutes at 56°C as reported by Branson W. Ritchie in his book Avian Viruses: Function and Control. Therefore, the washing and steaming process is more than enough to kill the avian flu virus.

Marilyn Lingad of the World Health Organization (WHO) states the following:

“Based on the conditions mentioned (30 minutes at 130°C), the virus would be killed. Thus, feather pillows & cushions subjected to these conditions would be safe.”

Companies processing down for use in the USA must have a sterilization permit. This permit is given by the state of Pennsylvania only after an on-site plant inspection. Inspectors ensure down and feathers are washed and sanitized correctly. All down and feather products that have “STERILIZED” on the USA law tag label use down that has been processed using the above procedure.

The question of avian flu in down and feathers is a non-issue with government and other avian flu experts. Countless studies have been done on avian flu; none of them prove or even indicate concern about the transmission of avian flu from down and feathers.

The importation of finished products and bulk washed down and feathers has not been restricted. Customs inspectors do make sure bulk down is clean and dry.

All of the recent media articles reporting the possible dangers of down and feather products cite a SINGLE source for reference: a retired professor in the UK. Both the professor and his former employer have since backed away from his initial statements.

All avian flu experts contacted by IDFL state that the avian virus is not likely to be present in raw down and feathers, and if it were, it would be deactivated by the washing and sterilization procedure.

Please contact IDFL for detailed list of responses by experts in the field along with other general information about the influenza virus.

Can feather and down products be tested for cleanliness?

Yes, the twin cleanliness tests of oxygen number and turbidity determine whether the proper washing procedures have been used. IDFL regularly performs these tests for down processors, finished product manufacturers, importers, distributors, and retail buyers.

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