

Image from Tufts Now



Thematic Analysis of the 2022 Outbreak of Avian Influenza in Alaska

*An Interviewee
Perspective*

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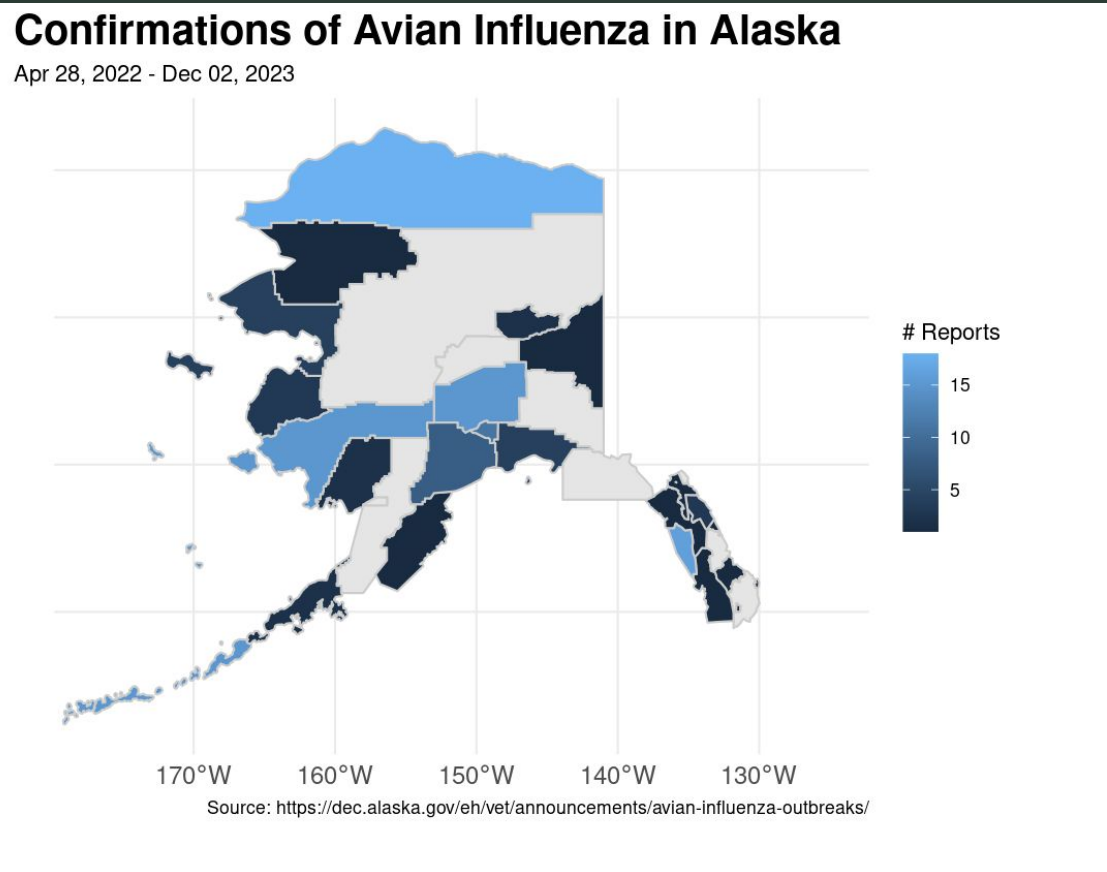
ALASKA NATIVE
TRIBAL HEALTH
CONSORTIUM

SUPERVISORS

INTRODUCTION

- Type A influenza virus
- Transmission between birds with some spillover to mammals and minimal spillover to humans
- Low public health risk
- Significant implications for avian subsistence resources
- One Health disease outbreak response

Figure from LEO Network



RESEARCH AIMS

1

Discuss successes in responding to the 2022 outbreak of HPAI

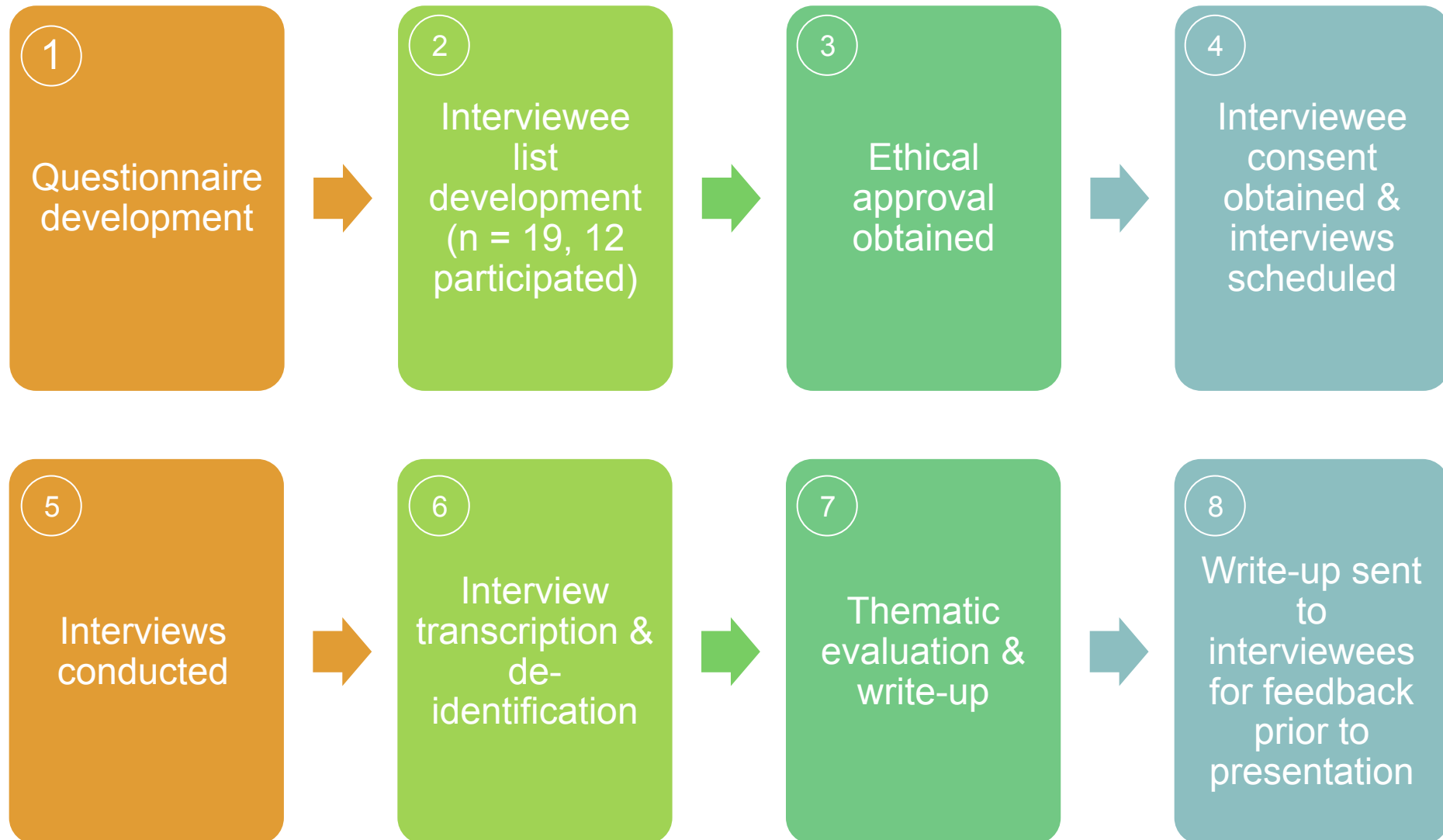
2

Identify the challenges in responding to the 2022 outbreak of the HPAI

3

Gather stakeholder ideas and recommendations to improve future zoonotic disease surveillance, communication, and response

METHODS



Results / Discussion

SUCCESSSES

01

LEO Network

- Route to share AI concerns
- Collaboration between public & experts
- Citizen empowerment

02

Tone of Communication

- Not too authoritative or alarmist
- Appropriately measured

03

Draft Materials

- Helpful starting point for developing regional materials

04

Information volume

- Adequate and helpful

Information must be regionally situated

- Regional efforts fell short during the 2022 outbreak
- Improvement opportunities:
 - A greater understanding of regional subsistence harvest, storage, and cooking practices for each region
 - Uplifting and outfitting regional organizations so issues can be addressed locally
 - Risk communication needs to consider who is the most vulnerable

The difficulties of addressing diseases that impact both human and wildlife health

- Difficulties included legality, uncertainty, and funding
- Potential solutions:
 - Tribal entities are more holistic than government agencies and may have greater access to funding
 - A One Health approach is needed to address the funding gap for wildlife subsistence resources

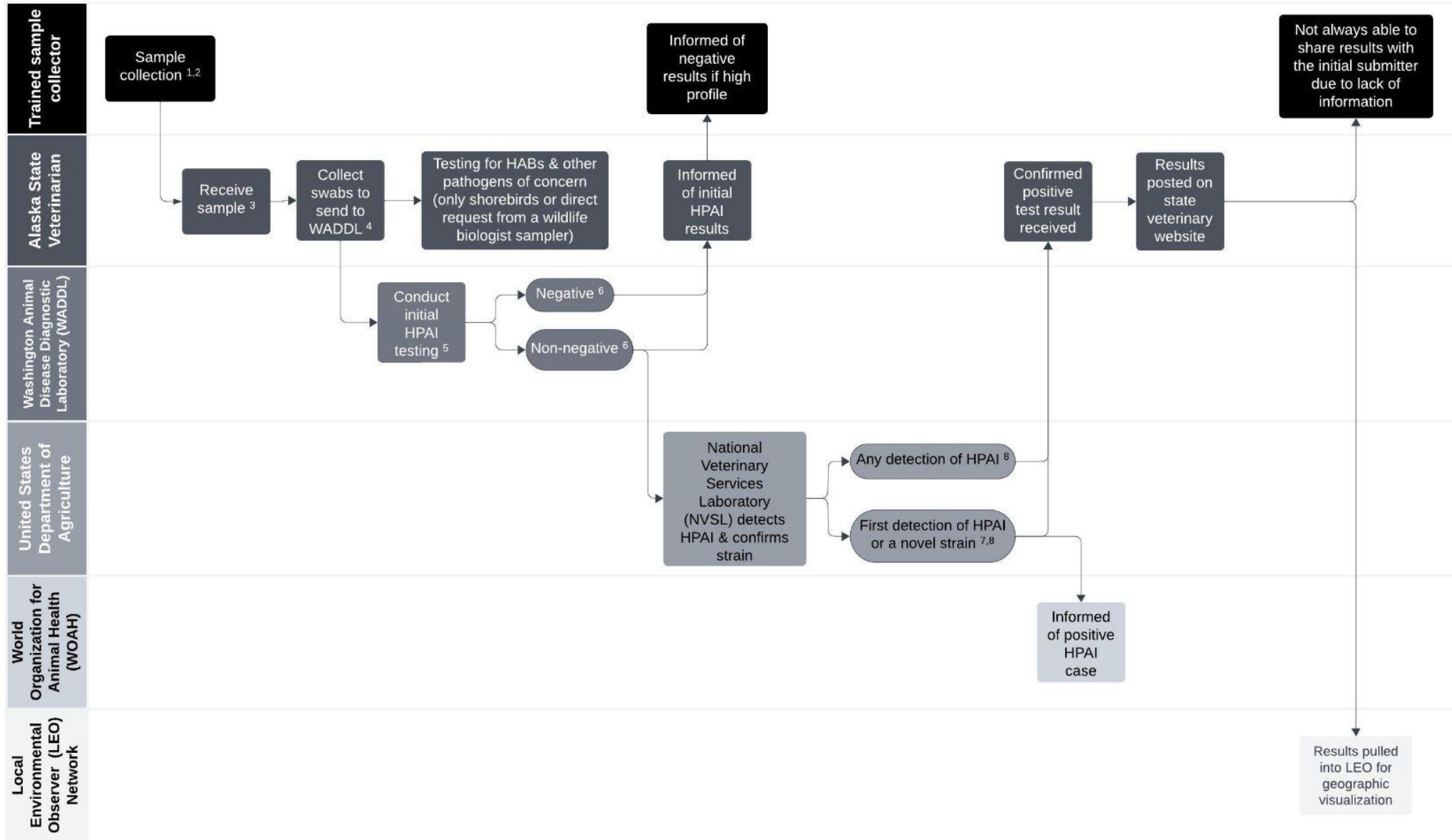
Question: Is the lack of funding for wildlife, as it relates to subsistence resources, an environmental justice issue?

The difficulties of sampling and testing

- Difficulties included:
 - *Who* could sample
 - Sample quality
 - Shipping from remote areas
 - Delays in results
 - Negative results were not posted
- Potential solutions require additional discussion

Actors and Process for Confirming Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

Temporal sequence of events →



Footnotes

1. Wildlife biologists & veterinarians were trained on proper sampling techniques. The general public received safe handling practices from ADFG (Alaska Department of Fish & Game) & USFWS (US Fish & Wildlife Service)
2. Bird had to be intact (no opening of the body cavity), uncrushed, & not showing signs of advanced decomposition (i.e. no maggots or foul smell)
3. Receiving samples from remote areas could take days or weeks
4. Birds that did not meet the criteria discussed in point 2 cannot be tested
5. WADDL was quickly overwhelmed by samples. Samples could only be sent Monday to Wednesday (Thursday if high priority). Commercial poultry samples were prioritized.
6. Results received within 1 to 4 days
7. The first confirmed positive case in a state or a species must first be reported internationally to the WOAH.
8. Positive samples had to be identified and destroyed and reported to a USDA regulator. This also delayed reporting.

The need for a centralized or regional reporting/resource system

- Difficulties included:
 - Guidance from multiple agencies
 - Accessing data and resources
 - Knowing who to call
 - Lag time
- Potential solutions
 - Centralized reporting system
 - Regional reporting systems
 - Communication of test result delays

Information sharing needs to be re-evaluated

- Fliers were ineffective
- Potential solutions
 - Information sharing through social media and television
 - Regionally situating information sharing
 - Generalized fliers were should serve as templates meant for regional modification

Data presented challenges and short-comings

- Challenges
 - Legal impediments
 - Data generated was limited and incomplete
- Potential solutions
 - Data sharing will ease as the One Health approach normalizes & interagency collaboration increases
 - Narrative approach
 - Acknowledgment or incentive program for reporting

Interagency collaboration is critical

- Interagency collaboration did occur but could be even more robust in future outbreaks of zoonotic disease

Disconnects

Timing and
quantity of
information

Anticipating
the
outbreak

Human
health

Reporting
system

- Multiple agencies wished they could have taken further action but were limited by staffing, funding, and general capacity
- Question prompted: What resources were needed to have an adequate response?

Thank you

Questions?