

First characterization of avian influenza viruses from Greenland 2014 - DTU Orbit (08/11/2017)

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In late February 2014, unusually high numbers of wild birds, thick-billed murre (*Uria lomvia*), were found dead at the coast of South Greenland. To investigate the cause of death, 45 birds were submitted for laboratory examinations in Denmark. Avian influenza viruses (AIVs) with subtypes H11N2 and low pathogenic (LP) H5N1 were detected in some of the birds. Characterization of the viruses by full-genome sequencing revealed that all the gene segments belonged to the North American lineage of AIVs.

The seemingly sparse and mixed subtype occurrence of LP AIVs in these birds, in addition to an emaciated appearance of birds, suggests that the murre die-off was not due to infection with AIV, but could be the mere cause of sparse food availability or stormy weather. Here we present the first characterization of AIVs isolated in Greenland, and our results support the idea that wild birds in Greenland may be involved in the movement of AIV between North America and Europe.

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