

2022 Avian Influenza in the United States¹ – What you need to know!

To date, USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories has confirmed the presence of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in commercial and backyard flocks in several states including Pennsylvania. Avian influenza viruses are classified as either "low pathogenic (LPAI)" or "highly pathogenic (HPAI)" based on their genetic features and the severity of the disease they cause in poultry. Caused by an influenza type A virus, HPAI can infect poultry (such as chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, domestic ducks, geese, and guinea fowl) and wild birds (especially waterfowl).

The clinical signs of birds affected with all forms of Avian Influenza may show one or more of the following:

1. Sudden death without clinical signs
2. Decreased water consumption up to 72 hours before other clinical signs
3. Lack of energy and appetite
4. Decreased egg production
5. Soft-shelled or misshapen eggs
6. Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks
7. Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs
8. Nasal discharge
9. Coughing, sneezing
10. Lack of coordination
11. Diarrhea

In addition to the disease infecting domestic birds, it is important to know that wild birds can also be infected and show no signs of illness. They can carry the disease to new areas when migrating, potentially exposing domestic poultry to the virus. The [APHIS' wild bird surveillance program](#) provides an early warning system for the introduction and distribution of avian influenza viruses of concern in the United States, allowing APHIS and the poultry industry to take timely and rapid action.

With the recent detections of avian influenza in wild birds and domestic poultry in the United States, bird owners should review their biosecurity practices and stay vigilant to protect poultry and pet birds from transmission of this disease. The following bio-safety guidelines are effective methods for safeguarding commercial operations and smaller flocks:

1. Backyard flock owners should practice strict biosecurity, including preventing birds from exposure and/or co-mingling with wild birds and other types of poultry.
2. Shower, change clothes, and clean and disinfect footwear before entering your poultry housing areas.
3. Respiratory protection such as a medical facemask would also be important and remember to always wear clean clothes when encountering healthy domestic birds.
4. Carefully follow safe entry and exit procedures into your flock's clean area.
5. Reduce the attractiveness for wild birds to stop at your place by cleaning up litter and spilled feed around poultry housing areas.

¹ Pennsylvania State Newsletter – April 2022

6. If you have free range guinea fowl and waterfowl, consider bringing them into coops or flight pens under nets to prevent interaction of domesticated poultry with wild birds and their droppings.
7. It is best to restrict visitors from interacting with your birds currently.
8. Do not touch sick or dead wildlife and keep them away from domestic poultry
9. Try not to handle sick or deceased domestic birds (if you must, use proper personal protective equipment to minimize direct contact and cautiously disinfect anything that comes into contact with the deceased and or sick bird).

As part of the existing USDA Avian Influenza response plans, Federal and State partners as well as industry are responding quickly and decisively to these outbreaks by following these five basic steps:

1. **Quarantine** – restricting movement of poultry and poultry-moving equipment into and out of the control area;
2. **Eradicate** – depopulate the affected flock(s);
3. **Monitor region** – testing wild and domestic birds in a broad area around the quarantine area;
4. **Disinfect** – kills the virus in the affected flock locations; and
5. **Test** – confirming that the poultry farm is AI virus-free.

Sick or deceased domestic birds should be reported to your local veterinarian. Positive domestic cases are handled by APHIS and its partners. States that have confirmed cases of Avian Influenza should work closely with USDA-APHIS on surveillance, reporting and control efforts. Disposal methods will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis depending on a variety of factors, including the size of the flock, space requirements, associated costs, local conditions, and applicable laws/regulations.

The United States has the strongest Avian Influenza surveillance program in the world, where we actively look for the disease and provide fair market value compensation to affected producers to encourage reporting.

If you do not raise domestic birds or have a poultry operation but you encounter sick or dead wild birds, please use bio-safety measures, and report your findings through USDA's toll-free number at 1-866-536-7593.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, this strain of Avian Influenza is a low risk to the public. While the transmission rate from animals to humans is low, it is a zoonotic disease, meaning it can be shared between species. To learn more about Avian Influenza and to remain up to date on the latest related news and information, you can visit the [USDA APHIS webpage](#).