

Avian Influenza Update

Poultry Biosecurity Practices

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Routine surveillance of wild birds in the USA in 2022 conducted by APHIS Wildlife Services has detected HPAI Eurasian H5N1 Avian Influenza in wild birds in 29 states. The disease has also been detected in some commercial and backyard hobby flocks in **23** states (Indiana, Virginia, Kentucky, New York, Delaware, Iowa, Connecticut, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Maryland, South Dakota, Illinois, Kansas, Wisconsin, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Wyoming, North Dakota, Ohio, and North Carolina). The affected premises have been quarantined and depopulated or are currently being depopulated. Flocks within the quarantine/surveillance zones are being tested.

There have been **no detections** in Arkansas to date (March 31, 2022) in wild birds or poultry flocks. However, an Emergency Rule that became effective on March 23, 2022 and in effect for **120** days prohibits the exhibition of poultry and waterfowl in Arkansas and requires that free range and backyard poultry be confined under roof or inside structures to prevent contamination from infected migratory birds flying overhead or direct exposure to wild birds. The rule also prohibits movement of poultry or domestic waterfowl from or within an affected area. **The rule is in effect for 120 days starting March 23, 2022.**

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the recent HPAI detections in birds do not present an immediate public health concern. No human cases of these avian influenza viruses have been detected in the United States. As a reminder, **the proper handling and cooking of poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165 °F kills bacteria and viruses.**

Biosecurity is a very important tool to use to prevent entry of a disease into your flock. It is extremely important that anyone involved with poultry production should review their premise Biosecurity procedures and protocols. This should be done by small backyard hobby flock owners and growers of commercial poultry to protect the health of their birds. **Commercial poultry growers should follow company Biosecurity guidelines and work closely with their flock supervisors.**

A few simple Biosecurity procedures that can be used by the **hobby/ backyard/ small flock owners** are listed.

Recognize the signs of illness.

You as the poultry owner know your birds and in fact you probably look at your birds more than once a day. As such you can detect early signs of illness such as a change in the bird's behavior; you just know that your birds are just not acting right. There are many poultry diseases but typically some of the first signs of illness are:

- a drop or cessation of egg production
- lack of appetite
- sneezing, gasping

- diarrhea
- drop in water consumption
- discharges from the eye and/or nostril
- ruffled feathers, huddling
- bird keeping to itself.

Do Not Bring Disease Home With You

If you purchase new birds make sure you look at them closely (even if from a reputable source) to check for signs of illness. This also is correct if it is your own bird returning from a poultry exhibit. Unfortunately, it is possible that a bird could still be incubating a disease and some diseases cause few signs unless a bird becomes stressed. Isolate (quarantine) new and returning birds away from your home flock for a period of at least 30 days. Isolate the birds as far away from your home flock as you can (at least 100 feet, if possible) and be sure and care for these quarantined birds last. Equipment such as crates, nest boxes, etc could be contaminated with feces, exudates, etc and may harbor disease organisms so it is best to not borrow equipment. If that is not possible; thoroughly clean/disinfect the equipment before taking it onto your premise. If you visit an area where there are waterfowl (such as ponds, lakes, and hunting) or areas with poultry make sure you change clothes and shoes and wash your hands before checking on your birds. **Do not bring a sick or injured wild waterfowl to your premise, report it to Arkansas Fish and Game Commission (800) 364-4263.**

Clean and disinfect.

Keep poultry facilities clean and free of weeds, debris, spilled feed etc.

Practice good vermin control.

Mice and rats can carry diseases and they can also attract snakes. Fly, buffalo gnat, and mosquito control are also important since these insects also carry and spread diseases. Wild birds should be excluded from your poultry pens. Secure poultry pens are necessary to exclude other wildlife, which may be predators of your poultry or bring in diseases. Pets should also be kept out of the poultry pens.

Keep away/Restrict visitors

Visitors could accidentally contaminate your poultry. Restrict visitors to your facility. Have all visitors clean their shoes/boots and disinfect before visiting your poultry flock. A pair of boots for visitors and yourself to wear around your birds or disposable boot/shoe covers is needed. Keep your poultry pens and facilities locked.

Get Help/Report the Unusual

If you see something in your flock unusual or is “just not right” get help immediately. Contact your local veterinarian, local county extension agent, Extension poultry veterinarian, state veterinarian, or USDA hotline. If you have a bird die contact your state or university diagnostic laboratory about submitting the bird for testing.

In addition to practicing Biosecurity, bird owners should not allow any contact between their poultry and wild waterfowl or areas where wild waterfowl are found.

If you have questions or for more information contact the Arkansas Cooperative Extension service, local county Extension agent, visit websites www.uada.edu , www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/defend-the-flock-program/df-resources/df-resources ,or contact the numbers listed below:

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