AVIAN INFLUENZA

SPREAD THE WORD, PROTECT YOUR BIRDS

Information for:
• Bird Owners
• Consumers
• Veterinarians

What is avian influenza?

Strains of the avian influenza virus are called low pathogenic avian influenza, or LPAI, and highly pathogenic avian influenza, or HPAI. The terms refer to how severely the illness affects birds, with the highly pathogenic avian influenza, or HPAI, causing the most illnesses and deaths in domesticated poultry.

Avian influenza is highly contagious to chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, geese, guinea fowl, and many wild birds. Wild waterfowl, like ducks and geese, can carry the virus without showing symptoms.

The virus can be in the feces, saliva, and respiratory secretions of infected birds. Other birds can become infected through direct contact with infected birds, contaminated equipment, and even through the air over short distances.

No one in the U.S. has become ill from an infected bird, though there have been cases in other parts of the world. It is safe to eat properly prepared poultry products, including meat and eggs.

How did highly pathogenic avian influenza get to North America?

Highly pathogenic avian influenza reached the Pacific Northwest in December 2014, when it appeared in British Columbia, Canada. The virus moved into Washington and infected some falcons and several backyard flocks. In 2015, birds in many other states were likewise infected, affecting numerous commercial flocks. This historic outbreak resulted in the loss of millions of turkeys and chickens.

Migratory waterfowl may carry HPAI from Europe and Asia to North America. As these birds begin their annual migratory cycle, they bring the risk of another HPAI outbreak in Washington.

What precautions can I take? Who can I contact?

• Don't touch sick or dead poultry or any wild waterfowl.
• If you do contact such birds, wash your hands and change into clean clothes before touching healthy domestic poultry or birds.
• If you see sick birds, call the WSDA Avian Program at 1-800-606-3056.
• If you are concerned because you or your family member becomes sick after having contact with birds, call the Washington State Department of Health at 1-800-525-0127.

Where can I learn more about avian influenza?

Visit agr.wa.gov/birdflu for more information and links to other resources.

Chickens, turkeys and other poultry with avian influenza can show many signs they are sick, such as:
• Eating less, huddling, or closing their eyes.
• Ruffled feathers or twisting their neck.
• Coughing or sneezing.
• Laying fewer eggs, diarrhea, and excessive thirst.
• Having swollen, discolored wattles and combs.
• Even sudden death, sometimes in large numbers within a flock.

Keep them safe - keep them separate!
**BIRD OWNERS**

**FAST FACTS:**

1. Protect your flock by keeping it away from other domestic poultry and all wild waterfowl.
2. Learn about biosecurity and take steps on your property to keep your birds healthy.
3. Monitor your birds closely and contact your veterinarian and WSDA immediately if you suspect illness.

**What can flock owners do?**

Protect your flock by following these biosecurity measures:

- Limit and record movement of people, vehicles, or animals coming on and off your farm.
- Keep your flock away from wild or migratory birds, especially waterfowl.
- Isolate sick birds and contact your veterinarian or WSDA.
- If you must handle sick birds, wear protective clothing such as disposable gloves, masks, coveralls, and boots.
- Wash and disinfect items going on and off your farm, such as footwear, vehicles and equipment.

If you see sick domestic birds, call the WSDA Avian Health Program at 1-800-606-3056.

**FOOD SAFETY**

**How can I be sure chicken and poultry products are safe to eat?**

Chicken and other poultry is safe to eat when it is properly handled and cooked.

**Follow these steps for safer food**

- Wash hands; clean and sanitize work surfaces and equipment.
- Do not wash raw poultry.
- Separate raw and cooked meat to avoid cross-contamination.
- Cook meat thoroughly to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Keep raw poultry stored at 40 F or below or, if in the freezer, at 0 F or below.

**The response plans created by government agencies and the poultry industry to handle an outbreak of the avian influenza are in place to protect the nation’s poultry supply.**

**Avian flu response plans typically include:**

- Establishing quarantine zones in areas with infected poultry flocks and prohibiting the movement of poultry and poultry products, like eggs, from quarantine zones without an official movement permit.
- Extensive testing of birds in the surrounding area to ensure the virus has not spread.

**Worth knowing:**

- Look for the USDA label on poultry products you purchase – this means the meat has been inspected to ensure it is safe.
- Commercial grocery stores sell only federally inspected poultry.

**Who can I contact?**

- **Food safety questions:**
  
  WSDA Food Safety Program, 360-902-1876
  
  Report sick domestic birds:
  
  WSDA Avian Health Program, 800-606-3056
  
  Report dead wild birds:
  
  Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 800-606-8768

- **For concerns if you or a family member becomes sick:**
  
  Washington State Department of Health, 800-525-0127

Visit agr.wa.gov/birdflu for more information and links to other resources.

**VETERINARIANS**

**FAST FACTS:**

1. Follow strict biosecurity measures when going on and off premises where poultry are housed.
2. If you visit a farm and suspect birds are infected with highly pathogenic avian influenza, contact WSDA immediately and remain on the farm for further instructions.
3. Educate your clients on the risks of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

**What can veterinarians do?**

Follow these biosecurity practices when treating birds and visiting farms:

- Limit and record your movements and the movement of vehicles onto farms.
- Wear protective clothing such as disposable gloves, a mask, coveralls, and boots. Change protective clothing between farms.
- Wash and disinfect items going on and off farms, such as footwear, vehicles and equipment.
- Contact WSDA if you suspect HPAI.
- Educate your clients about the risks of HPAI and related issues, such as the importance of good biosecurity, avoiding contact with wild birds, hunting risks, and food safety.