



NEWS RELEASE

Office of the Secretary

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www.mda.maryland.gov

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Confirmed in Washington County

ANNAPOLIS, MD (November 30, 2022)— Federal laboratory testing has confirmed a case of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza (HPAI) in Maryland. Following an investigation by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratory has confirmed poultry from a Washington County farm has tested positive for HPAI.

State officials have quarantined all affected premises, and birds on the properties have been depopulated to prevent the spread of the disease. Birds or poultry products from affected flocks will not enter the food supply chain.

“Avian influenza does not affect poultry meat or egg products, which remain healthy and safe to eat and handle. All poultry growers, operators, and owners, including those who manage backyard flocks, must remain vigilant,” said Maryland Agriculture Secretary Joe Bartenfelder. “MDA, USDA and other partner agencies are working diligently to address and localize the situation, including quarantining and testing nearby flocks.”

Avian influenza is a highly contagious airborne respiratory virus that spreads easily among birds through nasal and eye secretions. The virus can be spread in various ways from flock to flock, including by wild birds, through contact with infected poultry, by equipment, and on the clothing and shoes of caretakers. This virus affects poultry, like chicken, and turkey, along with some wild bird species such as duck, geese, shorebirds, and raptors.

Below you will find a list of common-sense biosecurity steps you can take followed by a list of Maryland state contacts if you suspect HPAI, be that in your backyard, wild birds, or a commercial operation.

Key biosecurity practices:

- **Clean and disinfect transportation.** Don't walk through or drive trucks, tractors, or equipment in areas where waterfowl or other wildlife feces may be. If you can't avoid this, clean your shoes, vehicle, and/or equipment thoroughly to prevent bringing agents back to your flock. This is especially important when visiting with farmers or those who hunt wild fowl such as when gathering at a local coffee shop, restaurant, or gas station.
- **Remove loose feed.** Don't give wild birds, rodents, and insects a free lunch! Remove spilled or uneaten feed right away, and make sure feed storage units are secure and free of holes.
- **Keep visitors to a minimum.** Only allow those people who take care of your poultry to come in contact with your birds, this includes family and friends. Make sure everyone who has contact with your flock follows biosecurity principles.
- **Wash your hands before and after coming in contact with live poultry.** Wash with soap and water (always your first choice). If using a hand sanitizer, first remove manure, feathers, and other materials from your hands because disinfectants will not penetrate organic matter or caked-on dirt.
- **Provide disposable boot covers (preferred) and/or disinfectant footbaths for anyone having contact with your flock.** If using a footbath, be sure to remove all droppings, mud or debris from boots and shoes using a long-handled scrub brush BEFORE stepping into the disinfectant footbath, and always keep it clean.

- **Change clothes before entering poultry areas and before exiting the property.** Visitors should wear protective outer garments or disposable coveralls, boots, and headgear when handling birds, and shower and/or change clothes when leaving the facility.
- **Clean and disinfect tools or equipment before moving them to a new poultry facility.** Before allowing vehicles, trucks, tractors, or tools and equipment, including egg flats and cases that have come in contact with birds or their droppings to exit the property, make sure they are cleaned and disinfected to prevent contaminated equipment from transporting disease. Do not move or reuse items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected such as cardboard egg flats.
- **Look for signs of illness.** Know the [warning signs](#) of infectious bird diseases.
- **Report suspected sick birds:**
 - To report a possible case of HPAI, please call the Maryland Department of Agriculture at 410-841-5810.
 - Commercial chicken growers and backyard flock owners can email questions about the outbreak to MD.Birdflu@maryland.gov.

For all media requests about HPAI, email: jessica.hackett2@maryland.gov

Due to biosecurity concerns, no on-site interviews, photos, or video are allowed. For more information on avian influenza, please visit: mda.maryland.gov/Pages/AvianFlu.aspx

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