

Can consumers be affected by eating chicken meat that was exposed to Avian Influenza?

It is important to know that additional precautions are being taken in the poultry industry. Any chicken that has been exposed to Avian Influenza will not reach consumers. Every flock of chickens is routinely tested for the presence of the Avian Influenza virus prior to going to the processing plant. Virus-positive birds never will be put into commerce, so there is no risk that meat from virus-positive birds will reach consumers. Of course, it is recommended that any chicken be cooked to at least 165° Fahrenheit.

What will happen if Avian Influenza is detected on Delmarva?

Immediately upon a suspicion of Avian Influenza being detected on Delmarva, whether in commercial chickens, backyard flocks, or in wild birds, an intensive response system will go into effect. Detailed local, state and federal government plans will be activated. An Incident Command System will begin its work. The goal is to safely empty a geographic area of susceptible poultry as quickly as possible through depopulation and on-farm carcass composting. Then, an intense system of testing nearby flocks and all flocks on Delmarva that are scheduled for movement to the processing plants will begin. There will be restrictions on the placement of chicks on farms near the depopulated farm.

Plans call for a rapid response led by the chicken industry with federal/state/local support, if available, for the first 24 to 48 hours of an incident. Life as we know it in the Delmarva chicken industry will change dramatically if Avian Influenza is detected.

Where can I get more information about biosecurity?

Your poultry company and the Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc. (DPI) can provide you with detailed information about good biosecurity on the DPI website. Go to www.dpichicken.org for more information.

For more information:

Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc.
www.dpichicken.org

United States Department of Agriculture
www.usda.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov



Answers to Common Questions About Avian Influenza for Poultry Growers



**Developed by the
Delmarva Avian Influenza
Joint Task Force**

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What is Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza?

Avian Influenza is a highly contagious viral illness that can infect a wide variety of vertebrates, including birds and most mammals. It infects the respiratory and digestive systems of the host animal that can spread the virus through its respiratory secretions, mucous, and feces. The Avian Influenza virus is extremely contagious and can cause severe illness or death to those animals that are infected. The potential impact of the virus is classified by pathogenicity or its ability to cause illness: No Path -> Low Path -> High Path.

Why is the chicken industry concerned?

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has the potential to spread rapidly through chicken houses and from farm to farm causing severe illness or death. HPAI infected poultry mortality rates are as high as 90% to 100%, often within 48 hours. Considering the density of chicken farms on the Delmarva Peninsula, one infected farm puts the entire Delmarva chicken industry at risk.

How did HPAI start in the U.S.?

An HPAI virus from Asia was introduced into the migratory bird flyways during 2014 and has since moved into the Pacific Flyway. Once in the Pacific Flyway, it mixed with some viruses found in North America. This is not unusual. This mixed-origin virus developed into a form that is very harmful to poultry. Migratory waterfowl have been implicated in outbreaks, but a significant number of cases have been spread through inadequate on-farm biosecurity practices.

How is HPAI virus spread?

Migratory waterfowl and wild birds are at high risk for carrying HPAI and generally do not show signs of illness. Since the virus is found in the feces of infected animals, traffic into and out of chicken houses by human beings, vehicles, equipment, unwanted vermin and birds, easily can spread the virus. Airborne transmission also can occur from respiratory secretions and mucous of infected birds.

How can poultry growers prevent the spread?

Chicken growers can minimize transmission of the virus by having designated footwear for their chicken houses. It is preferred to have one pair of boots/shoes per house since there is a danger of walking through wild bird feces between chicken houses and carrying the virus into a house.

Only essential visitors should be allowed in the chicken houses and only if they wear clothing and footwear that will prevent the movement of the virus into the houses. Growers need to maintain a record of visitors to aid in tracking the disease should it later be detected.

Growers should avoid direct physical contact with potentially infected birds, sick birds, dead birds, feces and litter without the use of personal protective equipment (ie: respirator, gloves). Growers should change their clothes, footwear and wash their hands when leaving the work area. Frequent-laundering of work clothes is recommended.

The goal is to prevent birds from getting infected in the first place. It is very important to maintain strict biosecurity practices to reduce risk to flocks.

Is there a risk for human exposure to HPAI?

While the risk of bird-to-bird transmission is strong, there is a relatively low risk of HPAI spreading to humans and causing illness. True avian-to-human transmission of the avian influenza virus has rarely been documented. Human-to-human transmission of avian influenza has rarely been reported. Since viruses can change, it is important to know that public health is closely monitoring for human infection and the possibility of human-to-human transmission.

Should I get the flu shot?

Yes. While there is not yet a vaccine for humans to prevent Avian Influenza, getting an annual flu shot is a good idea. This is because if you were infected with both Avian Influenza and the human flu, the two viruses could mix and produce a different strain. An annual flu shot will help to prevent this from happening. Flu vaccine can be found throughout the community during flu season for little or no cost. Check with your doctor or local health department for availability.

What about anti-viral therapy?

There are medications that your doctor can prescribe that can prevent or treat the flu. Treatment with these anti-viral medications may reduce the severity and length of flu symptoms, while also shortening the time that you can spread the flu to others. You need to start this medication within 48 hours of getting sick so contact your doctor as soon as symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches) appear.