

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Frequently Asked Questions

4-29-2022

Do we have Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in Kansas?

- Yes, we have confirmed cases of HPAI in a commercial flock as well as several backyard flocks and in wild birds in Kansas.
- Confirmed cases of HPAI at this time (confirmed by USDA at Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory): many states have confirmed cases in commercial and backyard operations as well as wild birds.
- Find detailed lists of cases confirmed at the USDA website. You can find that link on the top of the KDA Avian Influenza page at www.agriculture.ks.gov/AvianInfluenza. Or you can google “USDA HPAI 2022” to find that list.

What is Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza?

- Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is a rapidly spreading viral disease that can infect many types of birds.
- HPAI circulates among the wild bird population and, like other flu viruses, can change or mutate. Avian influenza can affect a wide variety of birds, including migratory waterfowl and poultry. Each year, birds experience a flu season just like humans and, as with people, some forms of the flu are worse than others.

Are all “bird flus” the same?

- The avian influenza virus can be configured into more than 150 strains, as determined by the DNA-level combinations of “H” and “N.” For example, the virus may be classified as H1N2, H2N2 or H7N2. Strains referred to as “highly pathogenic” are more deadly to poultry and wild birds.
- The strain now circulating is considered highly pathogenic.

Are there public health risks?

- Avian influenza does not present an immediate public health concern.
- Although rare, humans and other mammals can be vulnerable to the disease.

- There have been no reported cases due to consumption of infected, cooked meat. As a reminder, the proper handling and cooking of poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165 °F kills bacteria and viruses.

Is HPAI contagious? Who is susceptible?

- Yes, it is contagious.
- Birds are the most susceptible animal.
- Avian influenza exists naturally in wild birds, especially waterfowl.
- Although rare, humans and other mammals can be vulnerable to the disease.

If your backyard poultry have died/appear ill, what should you do?

- To report dead poultry, start by calling your veterinarian. If you don't have a regular vet, call the Kansas Animal Health Commissioner's office at 833-765-2006 or email us at KDA.HPAI@ks.gov.

What are symptoms of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in birds?

- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Respiratory distress
- Sudden death without clinical signs
- Lack of energy and appetite
- Decreased egg production and/or soft-shelled or misshapen eggs
- Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, combs and legs
- Nasal discharge
- Incoordination
- Diarrhea

How can I avoid HPAI in my flock or stop it from spreading??

Key Biosecurity Practices:

- Prevent contact with wild birds, especially wild waterfowl. Remove any potential nesting areas for wild birds.
- Cover and enclose outdoor feeding areas, and cover stored feed.
- Take all possible steps to separate wild birds from having any access to your flock or their living area.
- Clean and disinfect any vehicle tires or equipment that has been on other farms or other locations where there is poultry or wild birds.
- Wear clean clothing, boots and shoes when in contact with your flock.
- Restrict unauthorized people and vehicles.
- Isolate new birds.
- Do not move birds from farm to farm.
- Be sure your birds have no contact with contaminated birds.

- Notify your veterinarian OR CALL KDA if you see symptoms in your birds.
- Stay informed about the health of neighboring birds.

How does the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus spread?

- HPAI can spread globally through natural migration.
- Wild birds can spread HPAI through contact or environmental exposure.
- HPAI spreads quickly by bird-to-bird contact.
- Viruses can be carried by manure, equipment, vehicles, egg flats, crates, clothing, shoes and people who have come in contact with the virus.
- The disease may spread through contact with infected animals or ingestion of infected food or water.

How is HPAI treated?

- At this time there is no known treatment.

I found a dead wild bird in my yard? What do I do?

- Five or more dead wild birds found in one area should be reported to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Wildlife Disease Coordinator at 620-342-0658. Avian influenza is most often found in water birds, such as waterfowl (geese, ducks, swans), and shorebirds (sandpiper-type birds).
- Dead wild birds should not be handled with bare hands.

Should we quit feeding birds in our bird feeders? Does HPAI affect those birds too?

- Songbirds (robins, cardinals, chickadees) are not considered to be at high risk for HPAI. Wild birds that are at risk are primarily wild migratory waterfowl (geese, ducks) along with game birds (pheasant, quail), wild turkeys, and raptors (hawks, owls).

What is the industry and government doing to protect the U.S. food supply from HPAI?

- The Kansas Department of Agriculture is working closely with USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services along with other affected states on a joint incident response. State officials have quarantined the affected premises in several states, including Kansas, and birds on the property were depopulated to prevent the spread of the disease. Birds and eggs from the flock will not enter the food system.
- The United States has the strongest AI surveillance program in the world, and USDA is working with its partners to actively look for the disease in commercial poultry operations, live bird markets and in migratory wild bird populations.

- The likelihood of avian influenza-infected poultry entering the U.S. food supply is extremely low due to import restrictions, extensive disease testing programs, and state/federal inspection programs.
- All shipments of eggs and poultry are tested to ensure that products are free of avian influenza before entering the food supply.
- The United States prohibits poultry and poultry products from regions where avian influenza has been detected in commercial or traditionally raised poultry.

Can my birds get HPAI from infected feed sources?

- Yes. This is why it's critical to cover your feed both in storage and while your birds are being fed, to prevent exposure to wild birds.

We were planning to buy chicks, ducklings, etc. this spring. Can we still do that?

- Yes, you can still buy new birds, but we strongly advise you to do so with great caution. When buying a bird, confirm with the seller that they have been implementing biosecurity protocol and that the flock has been healthy.
- Isolate new birds from your other birds for at least 30 days.
- To prevent disease, it is best not to mix young and old birds or birds from different species or different sources.