



AVIAN FLU

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AVIAN FLU?

WHAT IS AVIAN INFLUENZA?

Just like humans, birds can get the flu. "Avian influenza," "avian flu" or simply "bird flu" is a disease that affects birds, including poultry like chickens, turkeys and ducks. It is caused by a virus that is passed from bird to bird through their saliva, nasal secretions and/or feces. Other susceptible birds pick up the virus by directly touching the infected bird's fluids or by touching a surface that has been contaminated by the fluids. There are two classifications of bird flu – low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) and highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). Birds who contract LPAI sometimes don't show any symptoms or show mild ones, like ruffled feathers or lower egg production. Birds with HPAI suffer more severe symptoms similar to symptoms of human flu like lack of energy or appetite, lack of coordination, coughing, sneezing or nasal secretions, and can cause rapid death.



CAN PEOPLE CATCH AVIAN INFLUENZA?

The risk of humans contracting avian flu is very low, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Scientists say bird flu is not easily transmitted from birds to humans.

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF HPAI INCIDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES?

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) on March 5, 2017 confirmed the presence of highly pathogenic H7 avian influenza (HPAI) in one commercial broiler breeder flock in Lincoln County, Tennessee, along the Mississippi flyway. The virus was detected on a single farm after experiencing increased mortality, and depopulation of the birds on the farm is complete. All flocks located within a six-mile radius of the farm will be tested and will not be transported unless they test negative for the virus. (A broiler breeder farm contains roosters and hens – known as "parent stock" – which produce fertilized eggs, which hatch into the broiler chickens we raise for meat.)

The strain of bird flu detected at the Tennessee broiler breeder farm is of North American wild bird lineage, and it is not the same strain of bird flu that is currently circulating in Europe and Asia.

APHIS on March 16 confirmed a second case of highly pathogenic H7N9 avian influenza in a commercial breeder flock in Lincoln County, Tennessee. The flock displayed signs of illness and experienced increased mortality. This H7N9 strain is of North American wild bird lineage and is the same strain of avian influenza that was previously confirmed in Tennessee. It is NOT the same as the China H7N9 virus that has impacted poultry and infected humans in Asia. The flock of 55,000 chickens is located in the Mississippi flyway, within three kilometers of the first Tennessee case, within the original surveillance zone that was established. USDA is working with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture on the joint incident response. State officials quarantined the affected premises, and depopulation has begun. Federal and State partners will conduct surveillance and testing of commercial and backyard poultry within a 10 kilometer (6.2 mile) radius of the site.



WHAT ARE CHICKEN PRODUCERS DOING TO PREVENT AVIAN INFLUENZA?

Avian flu is a serious issue that chicken farmers closely monitor together with the USDA and poultry industry. The U.S. has the most robust monitoring and surveillance programs in the world – and detailed plans in place to control spreading among flocks and eliminate the virus completely. All U.S. flocks are tested year-round for avian influenza, and if a single bird in a flock were to test positive for avian flu, then none of those birds would be allowed to enter the food supply.



Farmers, the USDA and the poultry industry as a whole continue to monitor for the virus closely, and have increased surveillance and biosecurity measures to keep flocks protected. [Good biosecurity practices](#) on the farm are key to preventing avian influenza from infecting the birds.

The following biosecurity measures are the most important to prevent disease spread and promote flock health:

- Limiting visitors on the farm and minimizing foot traffic;
- Avoiding contact with wild and domestic fowl;
- Avoiding the sharing of farm equipment;
- Having a clean and functioning footbath at each entrance to the broiler house;
- Ensuring that all visitors or personnel have disinfected or new footwear before entering a house or facility;
- Making sure feed and water sources are covered and free of contaminants, limiting the attraction of wild fowl and pests;
- Having official signage clearly stating the farm is a biosecure zone and any unauthorized entry is strictly prohibited;
- Employing effective pest and wild bird management practices; and
- Adequately training farmers, farm and company personnel in biosecurity and disease prevention.

[See biosecurity practices in action](#) and learn how farmers monitor the health of the chicken flock.





WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE IS AN OUTBREAK OF AVIAN INFLUENZA ON A CHICKEN FARM?

In the event of an outbreak, the poultry industry has strict procedures in line with state and federal organizations to identify the problem and reduce the spread of the disease.

When avian flu is detected, the following five-step response plan is carried out:

Quarantine

First, the farmer ensures that the affected flock stays put in one area, along with any equipment that has been near the birds.

Eradicate

The affected flock is then quickly and humanely euthanized.

Monitor region

At the same time, both wild and domestic birds in a broad surrounding "control" area are tested and monitored for avian influenza.

Disinfect

The farm where the flock was housed is then thoroughly disinfected to ensure any traces of the virus is killed.

Test

Last, the entire poultry farm is carefully tested for 21 days to confirm it is free of bird flu before allowing a new flock of birds to arrive.

No birds from avian flu-affected flocks are ever allowed to enter the food chain.



WHAT CAN I DO AT HOME TO MAKE SURE MY CHICKEN IS SAFE FROM AVIAN INFLUENZA?

Avian flu is not a foodborne illness, which means you can't contract it from eating poultry that has been cooked properly. And in the event a flock does test positive, it will not enter the food chain.

But as always, you should follow [proper handling and cooking](#) when preparing raw chicken. Get safe food handling tips at [Chicken Roast](#).

For more information on avian influenza, visit the [USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's webpage](#).
disinfecting feet