

# Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

February 26, 2022

About two months ago **High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) (H5N1)**, a highly infectious virus, was **found in wild ducks near the South Carolina shores**. Since then, it has been found in water fowl in other states. Around **February 9th** it was found to have **crossed over into domestic fowl on a turkey farm in Indiana** where 29,000 turkeys were destroyed at this farm alone. By the following Tuesday the virus was found in another flock of 26,000 turkeys in **Indiana**. Since then, the virus has been found in other poultry farms in **Virginia, Kentucky, New York, Delaware, Maine** and **Michigan** affecting over a hundred thousand birds, so far.

If infected birds are found in your area, all birds within a small radius will also be euthanized, or as the government states, "depopulated".

Health officials say **no human cases** of Avian Influenza have been detected in the U.S., and that the disease doesn't spread from person to person. Because of this, it does not appear to present an immediate public health concern (NOTE - a person in the UK did die from Bird Flu earlier this year). The **virus can spread to humans** from infected birds to people, but such infections are rare and haven't led to sustained outbreaks among humans.

This virus is present in large quantities in the respiratory secretions and feces of infected birds. Direct contact with infected poultry and contaminated equipment is the major means of spread. Sanitation, hygiene, and biosecurity are the best ways to prevent infection with influenza. If traveling, **avoid live bird markets and avoid contact with any sick bird**. Contact the proper agencies for proper diagnosis of disease and death in wild or domestic birds.

Migratory birds, including starlings and grackles, seem to be the carriers that emu farmers need to watch out for.

Here is a link on how to keep wild birds away from your pens and feeders. [https://stoppestinfo.com/320-how-to-get-rid-of-birds.html?fbclid=IwAR1VC6ttVk-79TS0EK4-H7cWcAb4xVdeB-dX6u3hSJoAr\\_10Ar1AWfpFXuk](https://stoppestinfo.com/320-how-to-get-rid-of-birds.html?fbclid=IwAR1VC6ttVk-79TS0EK4-H7cWcAb4xVdeB-dX6u3hSJoAr_10Ar1AWfpFXuk)

Now for some comments on Avian Influenza in emu. Dr. Donna Kelley stated that Emus can be infected with AI. They can get sick and die from it. They can also be asymptomatic carriers that show no signs of illness. Most common signs of AI are those of a respiratory nature - coughing, sneezing, conjunctivitis, and sinusitis. As for how Bird Flu H5N1 will affect the emu, I am unsure. A Highly Pathogenic AI Virus from Italy several years ago killed many emus with signs similar to that of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). Another Highly Pathogenic AI Virus (H5N2) caused extremely high mortality in ostriches in South Africa in 2004. The emu may suffer similar illness with Bird Flu H5N1 or have sudden death with no clinical signs.

**REPORT DEAD BIRDS, both wild and domestic.** The best thing to do is to have sick and dead birds diagnosed. This is for your protection, as well as, the protection of the other birds in your flock. Contact your State Department of Agriculture/State Veterinarian's Office, County Extension Agent, or the **USDA-APHIS Office - 1-866-536-7593**.

Up to date information can be found at <https://www.usda.gov/> (search for Avian Influenza). Or, directly at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai>

Other excellent information can be found at New York's Cornell University website, <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai>

## Avian Biosecurity Basics

In **order to receive payment from the government** if your poultry would need to be “depopulated”, you would need to be a member of the **National Poultry Improvement Program (N.P.I.P.)** or have an **active biosecurity plan** for your farm (see information below).

By **practicing good biosecurity**, you can reduce the risk of people, animals, equipment, or vehicles carrying infectious diseases onto your property – either accidentally or on purpose. You will also help protect other flocks by preventing the spread of disease.

**\*Keep Your Distance.** Try to **keep wild birds away** and **keep visitors to a minimum**. Only allow those people who take care of your poultry to enter your pens, this includes family and friends. Keep track of everyone who is on your property at all times. Make sure everyone who has contact with your flock follows biosecurity principles.

**\*Keep It Clean.** Wash your hands before and after coming in contact with live poultry. In addition to potentially spreading disease from farm to farm or bird to bird, you can also spread germs like *Salmonella* that can impact human health. **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.

**\*Don't Haul Disease Home.** 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.

**\*Don't Borrow Disease.** Clean and **disinfect tools or equipment** before moving them to a new poultry facility. Before allowing **service 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 Sick Birds.** Don't wait. If your birds are sick or dying, **call a local veterinarian, cooperative extensive service, or state veterinarian**.

If you find a **sick or dead wild bird, DON'T TOUCH IT. Report it. Call USDA toll-free at 1-866-536-7593.**

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