

Avian Influenza FAQs

(Avian Focus)

Updated 1/31/25

This is a living document and is regularly updated. CCE educators and specialists can reach out to Amy Barkley, Livestock and Beginning Farm Specialist with the SWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Program at (amb544@cornell.edu) or (716) 640-0844 for more information and/or to suggest additions to the FAQ.

For information on HPAI in dairy cattle, you can [visit the CALS website](#).

Flock owners and community members can reach out to their [local Cornell Cooperative Extension office](#) for assistance.

Media inquiries can be directed to Cornell Cooperative Extension Communications at cce-communications@cornell.edu.

The Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza response in NYS is being addressed by Cornell Cooperative Extension's NY Extension Disaster Education Network

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<p>What is Avian Influenza, and where does it come from?</p>	<p>Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza is a contagious poultry virus that has caused significant financial losses to the U.S. poultry industry and disruptions to the nation’s supply of eggs and poultry meat. The highly pathogenic strain, H5N1, has been circulating in the U.S. since February 2022 resulting in the death and euthanasia of over 148 million birds in nearly 1,500 commercial and backyard flocks. This is the nation’s largest animal health emergency.</p> <p>Waterfowl, both wild and domestic, act as the primary carriers, which can spread the virus to other wild bird and domestic poultry populations. Wild waterfowl populations are monitored, and hunters have the option to send their harvested birds in for testing. Wild waterfowl regularly carry low-pathogenic strains of the virus, but it can easily mutate to a highly pathogenic strain, as we’ve seen with this outbreak. The disease has spread to mammalian and avian scavengers that feed on the carcasses of dead, infected wild waterfowl. It has also been found to spread to poultry from infected dairy cattle.</p>
<p>Is HPAI in avian species a concern for NYS?</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Since the February 2022, we have seen 28 cases of this disease in domestic flocks in NYS. Of those, 2 flocks were commercial, 7 were identified at live bird markets, and 19 were found in backyard flocks. Affected flocks have been identified in Columbia, Dutchess, Fulton, Kings, Monroe, Onondaga, Orleans, Putnam, Queens, Suffolk, Sullivan, Tomkins, Washington, Wayne, and Ulster Counties. These flocks have been euthanized to help control the spread of the virus.</p> <p>It is difficult to predict how large of an impact the disease will have moving forward, but the risk posed is significant since the virus is present in the environment via wild bird hosts. To date, there have been 472 positive wild bird cases across most counties in the state. The majority of wild birds identified have been waterfowl, with some corvids (crows, ravens), and some birds of prey. HPAI has also been found in mammalian scavengers that feed on the carcasses of infected wild fowl.</p> <p>For more information on current detections on HPAI in wild birds, commercial flocks, and backyard flocks, visit: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai</p> <p>While the disease is circulating in wild and domestic bird populations, there is no need to panic, but there is need to be on high alert. Poultry owners should be prepared to report any suspicious disease symptoms in their flocks.</p>

<p>How does HPAI spread?</p>	<p>HPAI lives in the respiratory and/or intestinal tract of birds. It can be picked up from contact with infected feces, surfaces, or through the air, though aerial transmission from farm to farm is unlikely. It can be transported on infected feed, clothing, or equipment. It can also be spread through wild bird populations encountering domestic birds and can be transported through and on other living creatures, such as dairy cattle, rodents, and insects. Once on the farm, the disease is readily passed from bird to bird, infecting an entire flock quickly.</p> <p>Transmission into poultry flocks from dairy cattle is not yet a concern for NYS farms, since it has not yet been identified in our herds. Regular milk testing to confirm that the virus has not entered our state’s dairy farms is being conducted across the state.</p>
<p>Which types of birds are affected?</p>	<p>Domestic poultry flocks of any size, from back yard to commercial, and any species can be affected. Game birds and ratites (emu, ostrich, rea) can also contract the disease. Waterfowl may be affected and not show symptoms.</p> <p>Affected wild bird populations are predominantly waterfowl, which can carry the disease and not show symptoms. However, other wild birds, including birds of prey, game birds and corvids (crows, ravens) can be infected with the virus, too.</p>
<p>What are the symptoms of HPAI?</p>	<p>Any birds can be affected, but birds other than waterfowl react most strongly to the virus. Poultry infected with HPAI may show one or more of the following symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden death without clinical signs • Lack of energy and appetite • Decreased egg production or soft-shelled or misshapen eggs • Swelling of head, comb, eyelid, wattles, and hocks • Purple discoloration of wattles, comb, and legs • Nasal discharge, coughing, and sneezing • Discoordination • Diarrhea <p>Large death losses without any clinical signs or explanation like predators or the weather is known to be a hallmark of the virus. In some cases, expect the majority of the flock to die within 48 hours of the first symptoms appearing. Regardless of how the disease presents, a large portion of the birds in a flock will be affected. Waterfowl may carry the virus but not show symptoms.</p> <p>With any suspicious disease, rule out obvious causes such as predation and weather issues. Deaths that are in the realm of “normal” don’t need to be reported.</p>
<p>What species of wild</p>	<p>Most of the wild birds that harbor the virus are waterfowl, but birds of prey and corvids can be carriers as well.</p>

<p>animals can carry and spread HPAI?</p>	<p>Rodents, insects, and other living creatures living in close proximity to affected birds have the capacity to transmit disease on their bodies, but do not usually become infected. The exception to this is domestic cats, which can contract the virus from consuming infected raw milk from affected dairy cows or raw meat from infected poultry.</p> <p>Predatory and scavenger mammals including fox, raccoon, bobcats, opossum, and skunks can contract the disease from consuming dead infected wild birds.</p>
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<p>What species of kept birds are tested during an outbreak?</p>	<p>The species tested during an outbreak include the Gallinaceous species (chickens, turkeys, quail, etc.); game birds (chucker, partridge, pheasant, peafowl, guinea, etc.); waterfowl (ducks, geese); and red meat birds (ostrich, emu).</p> <p>While captive raptors are susceptible to the disease, Ag and Markets will test them, but positive individuals will be allowed to recover with strict biosecurity measures in place, rather than them being candidates for depopulation.</p>
<p>What happens if I think I have the disease in my flock?</p>	<p>Report it! If a large number of your birds are sick or dying, it's important to report it immediately so that we can stop the spread to other flocks. This helps protect the welfare of the flocks around you, the livelihoods of farmers, and the pleasure that backyard flock owners get from their poultry. To report, you can call:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets: 518-457-3502 - USDA (United States Department of Agriculture): 866-536-7593 - Your local Cornell Cooperative Extension Office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o https://cals.cornell.edu/cornell-cooperative-extension/local-offices <p>The first step in reporting is to answer a few questions about what's going on with your birds. If your flock is suspected of having the virus, a field veterinarian from NYS Ag and Markets will come out and evaluate your flock. They will take samples from live birds, dead birds, and your birds' housing. These samples will be sent to a testing laboratory with preliminary results expected in 24 hours. Until then, the veterinarian working on your case will help you put measures in place to make sure that if the disease is on your property, it doesn't spread further. Usually, that means that only people who are authorized to work with your poultry are allowed onto and off of your property, and the movement of live poultry and poultry products (meat, eggs, feathers, etc.) is not allowed.</p> <p>While the testing is occurring, you'll work with the USDA to inventory your poultry. In the case of a positive test result, all flocks on your property will be euthanized to stop the spread of the disease. The inventory will help determine the indemnity (payment) for your flock. This information will not be shared with other producers, the municipality, county, or town.</p> <p>The goal of the USDA is to depopulate your flock within 24 hours of a positive result. This 24-hour window is critical to keep the virus from building in the environment, potentially spreading to other flocks and re-entering wild bird populations. The veterinarian working on your case will work with you to be sure that your birds are euthanized quickly and humanely.</p>
<p>Where do I report unusual</p>	<p>Unusual illness and deaths of wild birds can be reported to the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The link to this map shares the office contact information by region: https://www.dec.ny.gov/about/558.html</p>

wild bird deaths?	
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I have poultry inside buildings and outside on pasture/in my yard. Are all birds affected if I have a positive test result?	Yes. A positive test result in one flock on a premise means that the entire premise is considered infected, and all birds would be humanely euthanized.
Can indoor pet birds be affected?	It is very rare for caged parrots or other indoor pet birds to be affected. Parrots are not tested during an outbreak. If you have poultry (chickens, ducks, quail, etc.) living inside your house, they are susceptible, and can be tested in the event of an outbreak.
What is the incubation period for this disease	The incubation period for this disease is 7-14 days.
If my birds are depopulated, how long until I can restock?	If your birds are kept in a building that does not allow outdoor access and can be easily cleaned and disinfected, it will take about a month as well as a negative environmental test before birds can be restocked. If birds are kept on pasture or are not kept indoors exclusively, restocking cannot occur until 150 days following depopulation in combination with a negative environmental test. 150 days is generally accepted as the time it takes for the virus to be deactivated naturally in the environment.

<p>What happens to surrounding flocks if a positive flock is found?</p>	<p>When a positive flock is found, a control and buffer zone are established around the infected premise. While flock census data will be collected from flocks in the control and buffer zones, the only flocks that will be tested are those which report illness. These birds are tested to ensure that they are free of the virus. Please note that this is the protocol for our current outbreak scenario. Protocols may change if there is a dramatic change in the number of infected flocks detected.</p> <p>If flock census data is collected, this information will not be shared with other producers, the municipality, county, or town. It is important that this data is collected because it helps the USDA understand the risk potential for a given area. Once this data is collected, the USDA will alert those producers and flock owners who've participated in the census about any impending threat of HPAI.</p>
<p>What can I do to keep my birds safe?</p>	<p>Because there is not a vaccine currently available in the U.S. for this disease, keeping it out through biosecurity is going to be the best course of action. The easy-to-follow biosecurity principles below are for all bird species, and can go a long way to keeping your birds safe from disease:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting against exposure to wild birds or restricting access to water or ground contaminated by wild birds. For many flock owners, this means keeping flocks indoors until the threat has passed. For others, it can mean not letting poultry on pastures that wild birds frequent and not allowing poultry access to open water sources visited by wild birds. • Closing bird areas to nonessential personnel or vehicles • Providing poultry caretakers with clean clothing and disinfection facilities and directions for their use • Thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting equipment and vehicles (including tires and undercarriage) when entering or leaving the farm • Halting the borrowing or lending of equipment or vehicles • Stopping visits to other poultry farms, exhibitions, fairs, and sales or swap meets. If visits must occur, poultry caretakers should change footwear and clothing on their return to the farm. • Banning bringing in birds from slaughter channels (auctions, processing facilities) to the farm • Establishing an "all-in, all-out" flock-management policy, where only one age of birds is kept on your premise at one time. <p>If you are a poultry hobbyist or small flock owner, we encourage you to look through the biosecurity resources developed by USDA-APHIS's Defend the Flock Program: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/defend-the-flock-program/defend-the-flock-program</p>

<p>I have my birds inside now. When is it safe to let them back outside?</p>	<p>This disease moves with the wild bird migrations, which are in late winter through early spring and late fall through early winter. Wild birds that migrate to and settle in your local area have the potential to be carrying and spreading the virus around their environment, potentially concentrating the disease. The cold, cloudy months of the migration seasons are the best environment for HPAI to survive a long time in the environment, up to 150 days. However, the drier, warmer environments of late spring, summer, and early fall are effective in killing the virus faster.</p> <p>Generally, it's a good idea to wait until the warmer weather is here and there are no recent cases in your state or surrounding states before letting your flock outside again. However, we ask that poultry owners be on alert for additional cases in your area.</p> <p>Virus detections in domestic fowl and wild birds can be found on the USDA-APHIS website at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai</p>
<p>Is there a vaccine available?</p>	<p>Unfortunately, there is not an approved Avian Influenza vaccine available in the U.S.. The best way to keep your flock safe is by implementing biosecurity measures.</p> <p>The USDA-APHIS Defend the Flock initiative has a great series of resources that outline easy-to-follow biosecurity protocols: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/defend-the-flock-program/defend-the-flock-program</p>
<p>Disinfectants used</p>	<p>There are over 200 disinfectants can be used against HPAI on hard, non-porous surfaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More information about using disinfectants against HPAI can be found here: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/antimicrobial-products-registered-disinfection-use-against-avian-influenza - The list of registered products can be found here: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-m-registered-antimicrobial-products-label-claims-avian-influenza

<p>Can humans be infected?</p>	<p>To date, there have been 67 positive cases in humans and one death. Most affected individuals had mild cold symptoms and were treated with antivirals. Nearly all reported cases have been traced back from prolonged direct contact with infected poultry and dairy cattle respiratory secretions or feces. The CDC shares that the risk to humans remains low.</p> <p>More information on H5N1 in humans can be found on the CDC’s website at: https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/prevention/hpai-interim-recommendations.html</p> <p>Any commercial flocks in which HPAI has been confirmed are euthanized and will not move into the human food chain. Products from infected flocks will be destroyed. As a reminder, the proper handling and cooking of poultry to an internal temperature of 165°F will kill bacteria and viruses.</p> <p>For milk, the pasteurization process kills the virus, making it safe for human consumption. Raw milk presents a risk of disease transmission. Abnormal milk is either diverted from the human food system or destroyed. For more information, you can read through this USDA announcement https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2024/12/06/usda-announces-new-federal-order-begins-national-milk-testing-strategy-address-h5n1-dairy-herds or visit the FDA’s web page on the matter https://www.fda.gov/food/alerts-advisories-safety-information/investigation-avian-influenza-h5n1-virus-dairy-cattle</p>
<p>Are hatchery purchased chicks and waterfowl safe?</p>	<p>The short answer is that ordering from a hatchery is safe. Wild birds and exposure to infected domestic flocks present the greatest risks to introducing the disease to uninfected domestic flocks.</p> <p>HPAI can be vertically transmitted, meaning that an infected hen will lay an infected egg that will hatch into an infected chick, but it isn’t likely. Most infected flocks will die within a week, and any possibly infected eggs that are in incubation would be destroyed as part of the depopulation process.</p> <p>The National Poultry Improvement Plan lists out hatcheries that are certified free of diseases like Pullorum, SE, and Avian Influenza. The map found on this page is clickable, allowing you to pull up a list of certified hatcheries by state.</p> <p>http://www.poultryimprovement.org/statesContent.cfm</p>
<p>Will poultry shows or fairs be affected?</p>	<p>At this time, there is no ban in place. We will continue to watch for updates released by Commissioner Ball.</p> <p>Announcements like these are shared on the NYS Dept. of Ag and Markets website: https://agriculture.ny.gov/animals/poultry</p> <p>(updated 1/31/25)</p>

<p>Are poultry swaps, meets, or auctions affected by the Commissioner's ban?</p>	<p>Currently, there are no bans on poultry movement or commerce in the state of NY because of HPAI, with the exception of those zones that are affected by a local positive case. In that case, you will be notified directly and individually. If a state-wide ban does come into place, it will list what specific activities are allowed and disallowed for the duration of the ban.</p>
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<p>Is hatching eggs in the classroom safe?</p>	<p>Eggs that are hatched in a classroom are typically not exposed to the direct contamination sources that spread HPAI. However, if a student has poultry at home, there is a risk that they can spread the virus if their home flock becomes infected. It's recommended that students who have poultry at home not come in direct contact with the incubator, eggs, or chicks that are part of a classroom hatching project unless they have washed their hands and are wearing clothes that haven't been around poultry.</p> <p>It's recommended that eggs sourced for hatching in classrooms come from an NPIP certified hatchery or farm. The full list of NPIP participant hatcheries and farms by state can be found at http://www.poultryimprovement.org/statesContent.cfm New York specific farms and hatcheries can be found at http://www.poultryimprovement.org/documents/ny.pdf</p> <p>There is little risk of eggs bringing HPAI into the classroom. Any flocks that test positive would have their eggs destroyed as part of the disease containment process.</p>
<p>Should I take down my bird feeders?</p>	<p>The risk of HPAI transmission to domestic flocks from wild birds that aren't waterfowl is very low, but there is potential for it to spread through this route. If you own or work with poultry, taking down birdfeeders during this time of increased surveillance and cases can help mitigate potential risk. If you don't, then feel free to keep them up.</p> <p>More information about this topic can be found on Cornell's Lab of Ornithology web page at: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/avian-influenza-outbreak-should-you-take-down-your-bird-feeders/</p>
<p>Can mammals get the virus?</p>	<p>To date, the Eurasian strain of H5N1 shows transmissibility to mammalian populations. Of kept livestock in the US, dairy cattle are the most susceptible, and there is evidence that the virus moves back and forth between dairy and poultry operations.</p> <p>Dairy cattle show mild respiratory infections, loose/tacky feces, fever, and drops in feed consumption and milk production. Other infected farm animals outside of poultry show mostly neurological symptoms. Livestock that have been infected to date include goats, pigs, and alpacas.</p> <p>There have been no detections of HPAI in dairy cattle or other livestock to date in NYS. For updates on H5N1 infections in livestock, visit the USDA-APHIS page at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/hpai-confirmed-cases-livestock</p> <p>Barn cats have been found to contract the infection from consuming raw milk and poultry products from infected animals. There have been no cases in cats to date in NYS. For information on HPAI in domestic cats, visit Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine page at https://www.vet.cornell.edu/animal-health-</p>

	<p>diagnostic-center/about/news/testing-cats-highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza-hpai-h5n1-ahdc</p> <p>Wild mammals contract the disease through consumption of wild birds that were infected with HPAI. A variety of wild mammals has been affected, and most show neurological symptoms. In NYS, we've seen the most positive cases in red foxes, but have also seen individual cases in a Virginia opossum, striped skunk, and Eastern gray squirrel. More information about positive detections in wild mammals can be found at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/mammals</p>
<p>Has the virus mutated?</p>	<p>In January 2025, it was confirmed that the H5N1 virus had reassorted into an H5N9 strain in a duck flock in California. This is not a cause for concern, as reassortment of viral proteins happens naturally in waterfowl, which are the reservoir hosts for the disease. The H5N9 stain is also highly pathogenic in poultry, which means it causes severe disease. We don't know enough about this assortment yet to give a comment in regard to its effects in livestock, wild animals, and poultry populations. Updates on this new assortment and its risk to humans can be found on the CDC website: https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/situation-summary/index.html</p>

<p>Can I safely hunt during the outbreak?</p>	<p>With over 11,000 detections of HPAI in wild bird populations to date across the US and nearly 500 in NYS, there is a real possibility of coming in direct contact with the virus from infected wild fowl. If you hunt, don't harvest or handle obviously sick birds, wash your hands with soap and hot water upon returning home, and clean/sanitize/wash all clothing, equipment, and boots worn in the field. Do not wear your hunting clothes or bring potentially contaminated equipment near your poultry. If you need to dress your harvested birds at home, do so in an area away from your poultry, preferably in an area that can be cleaned and disinfected.</p> <p>If you do not have poultry at home or work with poultry, hunting followed by subsequent field dressing does not result in a substantial risk of bringing the disease into the domestic poultry population and does not present a significant risk to human health.</p> <p>More information can be found in this article: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/2015/fsc_hpai_hunters.pdf</p>
<p>What is Indemnity?</p>	<p>Indemnity is a payment through the USDA to reimburse you for the value of birds that needed to be depopulated as part of an HPAI outbreak. The payment schedule and requirements to receive indemnity vary by flock size. Flock owners are compensated for the number of live birds on their premise on the day the disease is reported.</p> <p>Regardless of your flock size, know that the pool of money for indemnity is limited, especially if the country experiences a high number of outbreaks. There is limited to no indemnity for reinfections, which are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.</p>

<p>Disaster and Ag Assessments</p>	<p>As reminder for next year's ag assessment: if you've had trouble grossing the \$10,000 in farm income for Agricultural Assessment due to an HPAI outbreak on your farm, make sure to ask your local Cornell Cooperative Extension educator to see if there's an exception that can be made.</p>
<p>Where can I keep track of outbreak cases?</p>	<p>Virus detections in domestic fowl and wild birds can be found on the USDA-APHIS website at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai</p> <p>HPAI Alerts are shared through the NY Ag and Markets web page, found here: https://agriculture.ny.gov/animals/poultry</p>
<p>For producers with other questions and concerns:</p>	<p>Please contact the NYS Department of Ag and Markets at 518-457-3502. This number is for the Albany office.</p>