

Updated January 22, 2025

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has been found in either wild water birds, domestic birds, or both across the entire country. HPAI surveillance of domestic and wild birds in MA is ongoing.

All domestic poultry in Massachusetts are at risk of exposure to HPAI.

Good biosecurity is necessary to protect your birds and your facility against the virus.

Avian influenza can affect wild or domesticated birds and mammals. Most poultry, including chickens, turkeys, guinea fowl, and game birds like pheasants, will die within days of exposure to HPAI. Wild and domestic ducks and some other species can be infected without ever appearing sick. Domestic poultry are exposed to HPAI through contact with infected birds, their droppings, or feathers. Pastures, yards, ponds, and equipment easily become contaminated with HPAI virus. Humans have become infected with HPAI virus in the US, although most humans have had substantial contact with infected poultry or dairy cows and most infections have been mild. Humans can also inadvertently move HPAI-contaminated material into contact with domestic birds or dairy cattle through use of contaminated equipment, clothing and footwear, and vehicle tires. Mammals that scavenge infected dead birds can also become infected. Dairy cattle in Texas were identified as having been infected with HPAI (H5N1) in spring of 2024 and cattle movements have spread the virus to additional states. Shared equipment, vehicles, and personnel are playing a role in further spread. Poultry are highly susceptible to all versions of this virus.

Practicing biosecurity means taking the steps necessary to reduce the chances of infectious disease being carried onto or off of your farm. The first step is to identify the ways to mitigate the greatest risks to your birds or farm from Avian Influenza.

Reduce Risks to the Flock

- **Preventing domestic birds from having access to ponds, streams, and wetland areas that wild waterfowl frequent is of critical importance. Exposure to those areas has been the common link to all domestic flock infections in New England. Letting your flock "free range" poses substantial risk of exposure to HPAI. The consequences can be deadly.**
- Never introduce adult birds into an established flock unless they are isolated for 30 days and/or are tested clean of disease. Treat birds returning from shows as if they were new to the flock.
- Do not house different species together (e.g., chickens with turkeys or waterfowl).
- Prevent visitors from accessing your pens or coops. Do not visit other poultry facilities.
- Confine birds to an indoor area (covered coop, run, or outbuilding).
- Do not share equipment, supplies, or vehicles with other bird owners.
- Use a disinfectant footbath before entering the coop or other poultry areas.
- Clean and disinfect all equipment, shoes, clothes, and vehicles before entering poultry areas.
- Remove dirt and manure from surfaces before disinfection. "You can't clean dirt."
- Practice "all in, all out" when changing flocks. Get rid of all birds and disinfect the coop before getting any new birds.
- Check for parasites monthly and treat if necessary. Use a dusting area to prevent external parasites.



- Keep insects and animals like pets, rodents, and wild animals, especially wild birds, out of the chicken coop and feed.

Common Sense Biosecurity Measures

- Keep your birds in a safe environment.
- Make sure everyone that cares for your birds follows all biosecurity plans for your flock. Follow biosecurity protocols every time you enter poultry areas.
- Wear separate, dedicated clothing and shoes when working with your birds.
- Clean up spilled feed and discourage wild birds from accessing feed and poultry areas.
- Do not feed spilled grain from an outdoor area. Throw it away!
- Do not enter your poultry areas or handle your birds or equipment after hunting, fishing, or coming in contact with any other birds or areas that wild birds frequent.
- Never buy birds from unknown sources like auctions or other live bird markets.
- Care for birds in order of age and health – youngest to oldest. House sick birds separately and provide care for them last. Ideally, a separate person should care for sick birds.

Precautions for Free-Range Poultry

Poultry producers and backyard bird owners who raise birds in outdoor, non-confinement systems should prevent contact with wild birds, particularly waterfowl, and wild bird droppings.

- Identify high risk areas, including wetlands along migratory flyways, areas where wild waterfowl or shorebirds congregate, and high-density poultry production areas.
- Implement preventative measures for high-risk areas:
 - Keep birds indoors as is possible.
 - Outdoor enclosures should have solid roofs and wire mesh or netted sides.
 - Provide feed and water for all non-confinement-raised poultry in an indoor area.
 - Prevent access to creeks, ponds, and other surface water that could be contaminated with wild bird droppings.
 - Install and use a disinfectant footbath before entering the coop or other poultry areas. This can be as simple as a bucket with a secure lid and a long-handled brush to scrub footwear prior to entry.



Do not mix your birds with other production animals!

If your flock becomes HPAI- infected, you may not be able to move milk or other agricultural products unless your birds are kept separate, and you have good biosecurity practices in place.

Watch for Signs of Disease

It is important to know the warning signs of diseases such as avian influenza. Birds with HPAI produce more virus over time. Early detection helps prevent the spread of disease. Look for these signs:

- Increase in unexplained deaths in your flock, with or without symptoms

- Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing, and/or runny nose
- Decrease in water or feed consumption
- Watery, green diarrhea
- Lack of energy or unusually quiet
- Drop in egg production, or soft or thin-shelled, misshapen eggs
- Swelling around the eyes, neck, or head
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs

**If you have sick
or dead birds,
contact**



617-626-1795

If You Suspect Avian Influenza

Don't wait! Call immediately. Report sick or dead poultry to the Mass. Dept. of Agricultural Resources, Animal Health Division at [617-626-1795](tel:617-626-1795), or through [this online reporting form](#) or the USDA at [1-866-536-7593](tel:1-866-536-7593). Do not move any birds on or off your premises.

Wild bird die offs should be reported to the Department of Fish and Game, Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) using the online form found at mass.gov/reportbirds

More Information

- Biosecurity: Defend the Flock- USDA: <https://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov/>
- Biosecurity: Iowa State University: <https://poultrybiosecurity.org/>
- Current HPAI Detections: USDA: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animaldisease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai>
- USDA HPAI Response Policy: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/emergencymanagement/hpai/fadprep-hpai>