

Recommended Questions for Poultry Veterinarians

Dear Colleagues,

The Department appreciates your assistance in sharing awareness of HPAI. It is also important however to ensure that poultry including chickens, ducks, geese, and other domestic birds receive veterinary care in a timely fashion. We would like to make some suggestions for screening these poultry client's calls that can guide veterinary practices in their intake protocols.

Department staff screen our "sick bird" calls and determine next steps based on the answers to some relevant questions.

1. How many and what type of birds are in the flock?
2. How many birds are sick?
3. What symptoms are the birds exhibiting?
4. Have any birds died? If yes, how many and over what time frame?
5. Does your flock "free range"?
6. Is there a pond or stream on the property?
7. Does your flock interact with wild waterfowl?

Multiple sick birds exhibiting respiratory or neurologic symptoms and multiple unexplained deaths are screened further. If the birds "free range", if there is a stream or pond on the property, and if there are wild waterfowl that can congregate with the flock then those are high risk factors for exposure to HPAI. Department staff make recommendations to assist the flock owner to better mitigate the risks. We may test birds if deemed necessary.

If you or your staff determine that a client's flock is at high risk and has clinical signs consistent with HPAI then please notify us for assistance. The main office number is 617-626-1795. You can also reach us by email or fill out a Form-stack report.

Unfortunately, we cannot screen all calls regarding birds that need veterinary care. We have lately received calls from prospective clients indicating that they have been told by the veterinary practice that the Department must OK that the bird receive care. These included (as described by the owner) a goose with bumblefoot and a hen with a prolapsed vent. Clinic staff can observe a bird in the parking lot if needed to determine the risk of letting the bird into the clinic. Please do not leave the client waiting in the parking lot for hours.

We recognize the concerns private practices may have regarding HPAI. We encourage you to practice good biosecurity and utilize the new ideas that Covid taught us. Screen the calls. Use virtual techniques (perhaps a video of the home flock that day) to inform yourself about what risk that patient may pose.

Then please, make a timely decision to get those animals that need veterinary care (and who pose minimal risk) into the clinic and treated appropriately.