

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)



Hunters—Protect Your Poultry and Pet Birds From Avian Influenza

Avian influenza, or “bird flu,” is a respiratory disease of birds caused by influenza A viruses. Wild birds, such as ducks, gulls, and shorebirds, can carry and spread these viruses but may show no signs of illness. However, avian influenza can kill domestic poultry (such as chickens, turkeys, ducks, and geese).

Avian influenza spreads quickly through direct, bird-to-bird contact. It can also spread to birds via contaminated surfaces and materials, including people’s clothing, shoes, or hands.

If you raise poultry or keep pet birds, follow the recommendations below to make sure you don’t spread avian influenza to your birds.

When Hunting

- Do not harvest or handle wild birds that are obviously sick or found dead.
- Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after handling game. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

When Dressing Game Birds

- Always wear disposable gloves when handling or cleaning game and wash hands with soap and water immediately afterward. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Dress game birds in the field whenever possible.
- If you can’t dress birds in the field, clean them in a location away from poultry and other birds.
- Keep a separate pair of shoes to wear only in your game cleaning area. If this is not possible, wear rubber footwear and clean and disinfect your shoes before entering or leaving the area.
- Use dedicated tools for cleaning game, whether in the field or at home. Do not use those tools around poultry or pet birds.
- Double bag the offal and feathers. Tie the inner bag, take off your gloves, and leave them in the outer bag before tying it closed. Then wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.



- Place the bag in a trash can that poultry and pet birds cannot access. Make sure the trash can is covered and children, pets, or other animals can't get into it.
- Wash all tools and work surfaces with soap and water. Then, disinfect them using a freshly mixed chlorine solution consisting of 1/3 cup of household bleach per 1 gallon of water.

After Coming in Contact With Wild Birds on Your Property

- Do not handle wild birds that are obviously sick or found dead.
- Wear disposable gloves while cleaning bird feeders and wash hands with soap and water immediately afterward. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Protecting Yourself

Although avian influenza viruses rarely infect people, you should still protect yourself. To reduce your risk:

- Do not eat, drink, or put anything in your mouth while cleaning or handling game.
- Avoid cross-contamination. Keep uncooked game in a separate container, away from cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
- Cook game meat thoroughly. Poultry should reach an internal temperature of 165 °F to kill disease organisms and parasites.

About Avian Influenza

Avian influenza viruses are classified based on a combination of two groups of proteins: the hemagglutinin or “H” proteins, of which there are 16 (H1–H16), and neuraminidase or “N” proteins, of which there are 9 (N1–N9). These viruses are further categorized as either low or high pathogenicity, indicating their ability to produce disease in poultry.

Low pathogenicity avian influenza is common in wild birds in the United States and around the world. In most cases, it causes few or no signs of infection. However, some strains can become highly pathogenic in poultry.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza is extremely contagious and deadly to domestic poultry. If we find it in the United States, we must quickly eradicate the disease to protect our Nation's flocks and economy.

Questions?

For more information about avian influenza in domestic and wild birds, go to www.aphis.usda.gov and search “avian influenza.”

For more information about avian influenza and human health, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) and search “avian influenza.”