

# New Jersey Department of Agriculture

## Memo

**To:** Veterinarians  
**From:** Amar Patil DVM, MVSc, PhD, Diplomate ACVM  
**Date:** September 25, 2024  
**Re:** Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has confirmed the presence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in commercial and backyard flocks throughout the nation in an ongoing outbreak since 2022. In this outbreak, over 48 states have been affected, including various domestic bird types such as backyard-raised egg layers, meat birds, ducks, and geese. In addition, during the past six months, approximately 14 states have documented HPAI in domestic livestock, including dairy cattle, dairy goats, and alpacas. The U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) has also reported several human cases related to individuals who had close contact with infected livestock.

HPAI is highly contagious and often fatal in domestic poultry species. Public health officials have not reported of any significant clinical disease in humans associated with this virus. Avian influenza does not present a food safety risk; poultry and eggs are safe to eat.

Clinical signs of HPAI in poultry can include decreased food/water intake; respiratory signs such as coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge, periocular swelling, comb and wattle cyanosis, ecchymoses of the shanks; decreased egg product; and neurological signs. Deceased birds should be double-bagged and stored at refrigerated temperatures for testing. Do not expose suspect dead poultry to other poultry, wildlife, or wild birds. Wash your hands after handling sick or dead birds. For more information about the disease, visit [CFSPH HPAI Factsheet](#).

Proper biosecurity can prevent the introduction and spread of HPAI. This includes eliminating exposure of domestic birds to wild birds, minimizing traffic into the premises, and using appropriate disinfectants for equipment, shoes, and any other potential fomites. Disinfectants effective against HPAI include sodium hypochlorite (bleach), quaternary ammonium compounds, and other agents.

The HPAI virus remains present in wildlife and has been detected in wild birds along the Atlantic flyway, which includes New Jersey. As HPAI continues to spread across the United States, veterinarians are encouraged to review with poultry owners their biosecurity practices and remain alert for clinical signs of HPAI in their flock. Multi-species operations, particularly those with both poultry and ruminants on-site, are encouraged to mitigate areas in which spread of disease between species may be at risk. Online resources, such as [Secure Milk Supply- Biosecurity](#), [CFSPH - Biosecurity](#), and [USDA Defend the Flock](#) can be utilized to tailor a farm-specific biosecurity plan.

The Division of Animal Health (DAH) Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory ([www.jerseyvetlab.nj.gov](http://www.jerseyvetlab.nj.gov)) is available to assist with HPAI diagnosis. Please contact the DAH for more instructions on testing protocols or contact the Lab at 609-406-6999 or via email – [jerseyvetlab@ag.nj.gov](mailto:jerseyvetlab@ag.nj.gov).

***HPAI is a reportable disease.*** Any veterinarian or other person who shall gain knowledge or suspect the existence of the disease shall notify this office without delay.

If you suspect HPAI, please alert the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Division of Animal Health at 609-671-6400 or [state.veterinarian@ag.nj.gov](mailto:state.veterinarian@ag.nj.gov), or

NJ USDA-APHIS-VS Office 609-259-5260 or 1-866-536-7593

For additional information about the disease and outreach materials, please see:

- [NJDA Division of Animal Health](#)
- [USDA Defend the Flock](#)
- [USDA Avian Influenza](#)
- [New Jersey H5N1 Landing Page](#)
- [EPA Registered Antimicrobial Products Effective Against Avian Influenza](#)