



Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

Improving Biosecurity With Wildlife Management Practices: Reducing Water Access

Avian influenza and other diseases that impact domestic poultry often cause little or no illness in wildlife. That's why seemingly healthy wild birds and animals could spread disease onto farms when they are attracted to areas with abundant food, water, and/or shelter.

You can strengthen your farm biosecurity by putting wildlife management practices in place. There are several nonlethal ways to make farms less welcoming to wildlife.

Waterfowl, as well as other birds and animals, are attracted to water for drinking, bathing, feeding, and loafing. The practices below can help you manage water resources at your farm to prevent wildlife from coming into direct contact with your poultry and avoid accidentally transporting wildlife feces and secretions that may contain harmful viruses or bacteria into your facilities on boots, equipment, and food.

Remove Standing Water

Even small, shallow pools of standing water, such as those found in tire ruts, can attract waterfowl and other wildlife. Consider grading your property to avoid pooling water. We recommend a minimum slope of half an inch per foot. You should fill and/or grade all areas where standing water is seen for more than 24 hours after a heavy rainfall. Where standing water is unavoidable, make sure workers don't walk or move equipment in or near the area. This prevents possible contamination of boots and equipment.

Manage Ponds and Basins

Wildlife are attracted to ponds, catchment basins, and irrigation structures. To make these areas less desirable to most wildlife species, you may want to cut back or remove plants growing on the banks. However, this may make the area more attractive to geese. Please consult with a wildlife or wetlands professional before removing plants around ponds to identify the best solution for your situation and determine whether you need a permit to remove plants around ponds and other water sources per the Clean Water Act.

You can also use fencing to separate natural ponds or vegetation areas from active areas around poultry facilities. You can grid ponds with wires or ropes to discourage waterfowl from landing on the water. Floating a boat or bird deterrent balls on the pond and using predator decoys or other scare devices may also be effective, but you should move the decoys frequently so birds and animals don't become used to them.



There are several nonlethal management methods for reducing wildlife's potential spread of disease on farms.



Filter Surface Water

Avian influenza viruses can be spread through contaminated water. Never use untreated surface water to wet or water poultry or to clean equipment, barns, or other facilities. If you must use surface water, treat the water or install filtration to remove viruses and other disease-causing organisms. Test the water quality regularly to make sure the water treatment or filtration is effective.

Checklist

- Conduct a wildlife assessment at your farm. Do wild animals have access to food, water, and/or shelter on your site? If so, learn about and use wildlife management methods to improve your biosecurity.
- Keep waterfowl and other wildlife off of your farm by removing standing water and preventing access to ponds and basins.
- Do not use untreated or unfiltered surface water to wet or water poultry or to clean equipment, barns, or other facilities.
- Do not walk or drive trucks, tractors, or other equipment through areas where waterfowl or other wildlife feces may be present.

Learn More

If you have specific questions about how to manage wildlife on your farm or need help conducting a wildlife assessment, call the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Wildlife Services program toll free at 1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297).

For general information on avian influenza and emergency response, go to www.aphis.usda.gov and search "avian influenza."

The lethal removal of native wildlife is regulated under Federal and State laws. USDA and other experts do not recommend lethally removing native wild birds to prevent the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza or other diseases. Because wild birds are abundant and constantly moving, using lethal methods is not practical or environmentally sound. It is much more effective to remove sources of wildlife attraction than to manage wild animals after they have arrived on your property.

