

FAQs About Avian Influenza for Poultry Industry

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza, is a rapidly spreading viral disease that mainly infects birds. Migratory birds are natural carriers. Avian influenza affects chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, geese and guinea fowl.

Is avian influenza contagious? Who is susceptible? How is it transmitted?

- Yes, avian influenza is contagious.
- Birds, especially poultry, are the most susceptible animal.
- Exists naturally in wild birds.
- The disease may spread by direct contact with infected birds, aerosol and contaminated objects, such as footwear, clothing, equipment and vehicles.
- Although rare, humans and other mammals can be vulnerable to the disease.

What are the signs of avian influenza?

In birds:

- Sudden death.
- Decrease in water consumption.
- Decrease in egg production.
- Soft-shelled or misshapen eggs.
- Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb and wattles.
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs and legs.
- Respiratory signs: coughing, sneezing, respiratory distress.
- Unstable coordination.

In humans:

- Typical flu-like symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches.
- Eye infection.
- Pneumonia.
- Respiratory distress.

How do I avoid avian influenza or stop it from spreading?

- Avoid contact with sick birds.
- Avoid live bird markets.
- Wash your hands before and after any contact with animals.
- When traveling abroad, do not bring any prohibited items back to the U.S.
- Wash and disinfect any items used while traveling abroad.
- Use strict biosecurity measures on your farm:
- Keep flock away from wild birds.

- Restrict unauthorized people and vehicles from the farm.
- Monitor and record any visitors or vehicles coming on or off the farm.
- Clean and disinfect equipment and vehicles when traveling onto or off of the farm.
- Clean and disinfect footwear after leaving animal areas.
- Do not move animals from farm to farm. Isolate any new or returning animals for at least two weeks to allow time for disease signs to develop before exposure to your flock.
- Isolate any animals showing signs of illness.
- Quarantine the contaminated area.
- Immediately notify your veterinarian or the Nebraska Department of Agriculture of any suspected disease.
- Although poultry vaccines are available, there is not a vaccine that covers all 15 strains of the disease. Therefore, since there is no way to determine which strain will infect a flock, vaccines are generally not practical to prevent infection.

How is avian influenza treated?

- At this time there is no known treatment.

Are there public health risks?

- Although rare, humans can be vulnerable to the disease. Most human cases have occurred in people with close contact to infected birds or their environment.
- If you have had contact with infected birds or are showing symptoms, contact your healthcare provider immediately.
- There have been no reported cases of avian influenza following consumption of fully-cooked meat.

What to do if you suspect an outbreak:

- Quarantine contaminated areas.
- Isolate infected birds immediately.
- Immediately notify the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at 800-831-0550, the USDA at 866-536-7593, or your veterinarian.



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