

February 11, 2021

Avian Influenza – Heightened awareness for Poultry Farmers

An epidemic of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5 has been affecting countries in Europe, Asia and Africa since August 2020. The epidemic is still progressing and causing severe economic and poultry health impacts. Migratory wild birds are playing a significant role in the source of the outbreaks. According to the [US Geological Survey](#), the global level of HPAI virus detection in wild birds presently is similar to that found during the winter of 2014/2015 when HPAI struck Ontario poultry farms. **Measures taken at this time to improve on-farm biosecurity, including avoiding contact with wild birds, may reduce the likelihood of exposure to your flock.**

For more information on HPAI and current status, please go to : [2020: OIE - World Organisation for Animal Health](#)

Avian influenza (AI) can infect both domesticated and wild birds, including chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quails, ducks, geese, and guinea fowl. Birds become infected when they have direct contact with discharges from the eyes or nostrils, with feces from infected birds or from contact with contaminated surfaces, food or water supply. Although unusual, AI can be transmitted from birds to people and from people to birds. If you are concerned about your health or if you develop influenza-like symptoms after working with sick birds, please contact your health care provider.

There is an increased risk of AI infection to poultry flocks during spring wild bird migrations.

Avian influenza can be brought into a barn by breaches in biosecurity, and it is most often transmitted from one infected commercial flock to another by movement of infected birds or contaminated equipment or people.

All poultry farmers should monitor for mortalities and track flock feed and water consumption. Watch for any clinical signs of disease, such as depression, decreased feed consumption, egg production drop, swollen wattles, sneezing, gasping, ocular or nasal discharge, diarrhea or sudden death.

If you have any concerns regarding the health status of your flock, contact your veterinarian immediately.

Key steps to reduce the risk of infection in your flock include:

- Ensure adequate training of farm and company personnel in biosecurity and disease prevention.
- All people entering poultry barns, including farmers, employees and service providers must put on clean footwear, protective clothing and follow all biosecurity protocols each time a barn is entered.
- Minimize visits to other poultry production sites and **avoid any co-mingling of birds or contact with outside/wild birds.**
- Avoid exchanging and sharing equipment with other poultry production sites or farms.
- Ensure all vehicles and farm equipment that access the barn vicinity are properly washed, disinfected and thoroughly dried before use.
- Ensure that laneways are restricted and secured.
- Prevent wild bird and rodent entry to poultry barns and related facilities.
- Ensure that bedding is free of contaminants (feces from wild animals, etc.)
- If possible, “heat treat” the barn/litter ahead of chick or poult placement (to 30°C for at least 3 days).

Additional information is available at:

http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/vet/facts/avian_influenza.htm
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/biosecurity/standards-and-principles/avian-biosecurity/eng/1344748344710/1344748451521>