



Avian Influenza Rumor Control Statement

As of February 16, all poultry exhibitions, shows, sales, swaps, and meets in the State of Georgia are suspended until further notice. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has been identified in commercial poultry operations and a backyard flock in Indiana, Kentucky, and Virginia. There have been NO cases of avian influenza (AI) identified in commercial or domestic poultry in the State of Georgia. If you have concerns about AI in birds, call the Georgia Avian Influenza hotline at **770-766-6850** or visit gapoultrylab.org/avian-influenza-hotline/. For updates and more information, visit agr.georgia.gov/avian-influenza.aspx

Avian Influenza Key Message Points

- LPAI/HPAI does not pose a risk to the food supply and the risk of human infection with avian influenza during poultry outbreaks is very low.
- HPAI is purely a production and economic situation for our poultry industry. It is safe to consume properly handled and cooked poultry products, including meat and eggs.
- No human cases of this strain of avian influenza have been detected in the US, Canada, or internationally, and there is no immediate public health concern. However, this is a virus with the potential to mutate and therefore, the department of public health is closely monitoring the situation.
- The economic impact of the poultry industry in Georgia is \$28 billion dollars. When looked at in reference to our state budget of \$20 billion dollars, it is clear that this would be a devastating blow to not just our chicken farmers, but to the state's economy as a whole.
- The goal of Georgia's response efforts will be/is to quickly relieve the pain and suffering of sick birds, minimize the economic impact for producers and get the farm and community back to normal operations as quickly as possible.
- The key to preventing the spread of the disease is biosecurity. Biosecurity is the protection of agricultural animals from any type of infectious agent. Among the many biosecurity procedures that can prevent disease transmission are such measures as use of protective clothing, waiting periods for new animals and visitors, and cleaning. All bird owners should practice increased biosecurity.



Avian Influenza FAQ'S

Q: What is avian influenza?

A: Avian influenza (AI) is a virus that is naturally found in waterfowl and some species of shorebirds.

Avian influenza is broadly divided into highly pathogenic (HPAI) and low pathogenic (LPAI) strains based on its ability to cause disease in poultry. Low pathogenic avian influenza is a natural infection of waterfowl that may cause minimal to no signs of disease in domestic poultry and wild birds.

Due to stringent biosecurity practices, avian influenza is uncommon in most commercial poultry flocks in the United States; it is most often identified in poultry raised outdoors or those that intermingle with or are exposed to wild birds or their droppings.

Additional information can be found on the [USDA's Avian Influenza Disease page](#) as well as the Georgia Department of Agriculture's [Avian Influenza page](#).

Q: How is avian influenza transmitted?

A: Avian influenza is most often spread by direct contact between infected birds and healthy birds. It may also be spread indirectly through contact with contaminated equipment and biological excretions (droppings). Contact with contaminated droppings is the most common means of bird-to-bird transmission, although airborne secretions are another important means of transmission, especially within poultry houses. Droppings from wild ducks can introduce avian influenza into domestic flocks raised on range or in open flight pens.

The spread of avian influenza between poultry facilities almost always results from the movement of infected birds or contaminated people and equipment (including clothing, boots, and vehicles).

Highly pathogenic avian influenza can be spread from birds to people as a result of extensive direct contact with infected birds, such as during home slaughter or defeathering of infected poultry.

Q: How can I detect avian influenza in my flock?

A: Low pathogenic avian influenza can resemble any other mild respiratory disease (noise, swollen faces, conjunctivitis). In egg layers or breeding birds, egg production drops and eggshells may be soft. With HPAI, birds may become quiet, not eat and drink, have diarrhea, and have discolored combs and feet. Birds may also die suddenly with no signs of disease.

Q: What do I do if I think my flock might have avian influenza?

A: Testing for AI is free through the Georgia Poultry Lab Network. Call the AI Hot line 770-766-6850 or go online to gapoultrylab.org/avian-influenza-hotline.



Q: How do I prevent Avian Influenza in my backyard flock?

A: Use dedicated footwear and wash your hands when tending your flock. Do not let poultry drink untreated water from lakes and ponds. Do not let waterfowl become residents close to small domestic flocks. Do not come into direct contact with your flocks if you have seen birds in another country or been involved with hunting, or in contact with any other birds (zoos, auctions, flea markets, live bird markets). Do not come into contact with your flock or other flocks after hunting wild birds.

Q: Can I get avian influenza from eating poultry or eggs?

A: You cannot get avian influenza from eggs and poultry products that have been prepared and cooked properly.

Q: Can animals "shed" the virus without clinical signs?

A: Yes. "Shedding," as it applies to viruses, means that the animal's secretions and/or droppings contain viral particles that may infect other animals or people. Some animals (i.e., growing poultry) rapidly show clinical signs of disease and simultaneously shed virus. Other animals, including some species of waterfowl, may appear clinically healthy, but are shedding the virus, which is the reason that surveillance of waterfowl for early detection of influenza viruses along the major flyways is an important measure to prevent outbreaks of disease in commercial poultry.

Q: Is it safe to move my birds?

A: Please contact the Georgia Department of Agriculture or the Department of Agriculture in the state of destination to ensure that your birds meet all entry requirements before departing.

Q: How stable are avian influenzas in the environment?

A: Avian influenza viruses are generally sensitive to most detergents and disinfectants, and heating and drying will inactivate them. However, avian influenza viruses can persist in soil, feces, and pond water for varying amounts of time, depending on environmental conditions.

Q: What are you doing to monitor the spread of Avian Influenza?

A: Currently, federal and state avian influenza surveillance programs are in place for wild birds and poultry, and these programs are key to early detection of novel strains that could be problematic for animals and/or people. This surveillance by veterinarians, animal health officials, and industry are critical, because early detection can help prevent novel influenza viruses from becoming transmitted to, and established, in people. There is also international sharing of surveillance data, which keeps veterinarians and animal health officials informed about emerging novel strains around the world. Find the most up to date surveillance information [here](#).



Q: What is being done to stop avian influenza from spreading in birds?

A: In situations where highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) infects poultry, the birds are humanely depopulated by properly trained and protected crews on site to reduce the risk of infecting other birds and to minimize human exposure. Note that if euthanasia was not performed, many infected chickens and turkeys would continue to needlessly suffer and die. The U.S. maintains an indemnity program that has helped minimize losses to poultry producers and encouraged their participation in surveillance activities.

The USDA recommends six steps to help keep birds safe:

- Step 1: Keep your distance
- Step 2: Keep it clean.
- Step 3: Don't haul disease home.
- Step 4: Don't borrow from your neighbor.
- Step 5: Know the signs.
- Step 6: Report sick birds.

PROTECT YOUR FLOCK from avian influenza

agr.georgia.gov



As of early 2022, AI viruses have been detected in Eastern Canada and in wildlife in the US. Contact with the feces of wild birds can introduce the virus into small flocks. It can be from direct contact with ducks and geese outdoors, or on shoes and equipment brought indoors.

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza is a viral disease of poultry. It can be of low pathogenicity (LPAI), causing mild disease, or of high pathogenicity (HPAI), causing severe disease and death. There are different strains of the virus, for example H1N1 or H7N3. Some AI LPAI viruses can mutate and become HPAI viruses. Waterfowl contribute to the spread of Avian Influenza.

How do I recognize the disease in my birds?

LPAI can resemble any other mild respiratory disease (noise, swollen faces, conjunctivitis). In breeders, egg production drops and eggshells may be soft. With HPAI, birds may become quiet, not eat and drink, have diarrhea, and have discolored combs and feet. Birds may also die suddenly with no signs of disease.



How do I prevent Avian Influenza in my small flock?

Use dedicated footwear and wash your hands when tending your flock.

Do not let poultry drink untreated water from lakes and ponds.

Do not let waterfowl become residents close to small domestic flocks.

Do not come into direct contact with your flocks if you have seen birds in another country or been involved with hunting, or in contact with any other birds (zoos, auctions, flea markets, live bird markets).

What do I do if I suspect my birds have AI?

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