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## Poultry and Fowl Owners Encouraged to Strengthen Biosecurity to Protect Against Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

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 a flock of commercial turkeys in Indiana, a flock of commercial broiler chickens in Kentucky, and a backyard flock of mixed species birds in Virginia, in February 2022. To learn more about these cases, [click here](#).

Prior to these cases, APHIS also reported multiple confirmations of HPAI in the wild bird population, since January 2022. These findings are not unexpected, as wild birds can be infected with HPAI and can carry the disease to new areas when migrating. APHIS anticipates additional wild bird findings.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these avian influenza detections [do not present an immediate public health concern](#). No human cases of these avian influenza viruses have been detected in the United States.

The United States has the strongest AI surveillance program in the world, and USDA is working with its partners to actively surveil and test in the affected areas and look for the disease in other commercial poultry operations, live bird markets and in migratory wild bird populations.

While avian influenza has not been detected in Texas, the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) strongly encourages poultry owners to implement or strengthen biosecurity practices in both commercial and backyard flocks immediately. Creating a barrier between migratory birds and your flock is of the utmost importance due to the known HPAI in the fly ways. Practicing sound biosecurity can help keep disease away from your flock and keep your birds healthy.

Below please find general information about avian influenza and helpful biosecurity tips to keep your flock healthy.

### WHAT IS AVIAN INFLUENZA?

Avian influenza (AI) is an influenza type A virus that infects domestic poultry, fowl and birds, such as chickens, turkeys, pheasants, ducks, geese and guinea fowl.

There are many strains of the AI virus. Based on the severity of illness caused by the virus, these strains are put into two classifications, low pathogenic and highly pathogenic. Highly pathogenic strains are capable of mutating to HPAI under certain field conditions. HPAI virus strains are extremely infectious, often fatal to chickens, and can spread rapidly from flock-to-flock.



## SYMPTOMS

Signs of AI infection may differ based on the strain. Signs and symptoms of AI infected birds may include:

- Sudden death without clinical signs
- Lack of energy and appetite
- Decreased egg production
- Soft-shelled or misshapen eggs
- Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles and hocks
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs and legs
- Nasal discharge
- Coughing and sneezing
- Incoordination
- Diarrhea

Birds infected with LPAI may show few to no warning signs.

## TRANSMISSION

AI viruses are transmitted directly from bird to bird through airborne transmission or indirectly through contaminated material such as shoes, tools, and equipment. The movement of humans, birds and equipment, along with exposure to migratory waterfowl such as ducks, geese and shorebirds, increases the risk for the introduction of AI.

## DIAGNOSIS

Producers who suspect poultry to be infected with the AI virus, or observe clinical signs of HPAI, such as high morbidity and mortality, should immediately contact the TAHC or USDA for testing, if necessary. Upon laboratory confirmation of the disease, the TAHC will work closely with the bird owner to prevent disease spread. Response personnel will visit the operation and work to efficiently take samples, quarantine the premises and inventory poultry.

## PREVENTION

Poultry producers and dealers should follow sound biosecurity practices to prevent the introduction of AI into their flocks.

- Restrict traffic onto and off of property.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect all equipment, tires and undercarriages of vehicles before entering or leaving areas where poultry are present.
- Allow as few people to enter poultry premises as possible.
- Always wear clean clothing and disinfect properly before and after working with poultry.
- Protect poultry flocks from coming into contact with wild or migratory birds.
- Keep poultry away from any source of water that may have been contaminated by wild birds.
- Avoid visiting other poultry farms. If you must go where other poultry are located, disinfect or change clothing and shoes before returning to your farm.
- Do not bring birds to the farm unless you know the health status of the flock of origin.

## HUMAN HEALTH CONCERNS

Avian influenza does not present an immediate public health concern. No human cases of these avian influenza viruses have been detected in the United States. As a reminder, the proper handling and cooking of poultry



and eggs to an internal temperature of 165 °F kills bacteria and viruses. For more information on human health concerns visit: [https://www.dshs.texas.gov/idcu/disease/avian\\_flu/](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/idcu/disease/avian_flu/).

### REPORTING SICK BIRDS

Remain vigilant in examining the health of your birds. If your birds exhibit unusual death loss or signs of illness, or you observe large scale sickness and mortality of wild birds, call your private veterinarian, the TAHC: 1-800-550-8242, or the USDA: 1-866-536-7593 immediately.

### STAY INFORMED

- Check the USDA 2022 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza page: [www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai).
- Check the TAHC Poultry Health page: [https://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal\\_health/poultry/](https://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/poultry/)
- Become a TAHC Poultry Insider for HPAI situational updates: <https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/d.jsp?llr=kpzk9zgab&p=oi&m=1106820556266&sit=h8kli8f gb&f=a8fa4ca8-3118-449f-8bd8-0c80138d1929>

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- TAHC Resources: [www.tahc.texas.gov/animal\\_health/poultry/](http://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/poultry/)
- TAHC Avian Influenza Fact Sheet: [www.tahc.texas.gov/news/brochures/TAHCFactsheet\\_AvianInfluenza.pdf](http://www.tahc.texas.gov/news/brochures/TAHCFactsheet_AvianInfluenza.pdf)
- USDA Resources: [www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian)
- USDA Defend the Flock: <http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov>.