



Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

Avian influenza is an airborne respiratory virus that spreads easily among chickens through nasal and eye secretions, as well as manure. The virus can be spread in various ways from flock to flock, including by wild birds, through contact with infected poultry, by equipment, and on the clothing and shoes of caretakers.

As a producer, you need to protect your flocks and be vigilant in reporting signs of illness. With known cases of HPAI in wild birds, backyard flocks, a layer operation, and broiler operations in Nebraska, all poultry farms should follow strict biosecurity measures, monitor birds closely, and report immediately if you suspect illness.

HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA

A Typical First 72 Hours (Things Can Change)

Before You Know

SEE SOMETHING

If you notice increased mortality, less water usage, decreased appetite, egg production going down, birds having difficulty breathing, or diarrhea, then:

SAY SOMETHING

Call the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at 402-471-2351, the USDA at 866-536-7593, or your local veterinarian.

RESPONSE

A state or federal official will let you know next steps.

Note: *If you are compensated for your flock, reporting sooner is better in terms of how your inventory is counted.*

0-12 Hours

QUARANTINE

You will probably receive a verbal quarantine order from a state official, followed soon by a written quarantine order.

A quarantine means only authorized personnel are allowed on and off your property. Do not move birds, poultry products, or equipment.

INVENTORY

An official will work with you on your inventory of birds if your flock needs to be depopulated.

SUSPICION

Samples will go to the nearest NAHLN lab with results typically coming back in 24 hours. If results come back positive for avian influenza, your flock is considered to be “presumptive positive,” which means we are relatively sure, but not 100% positive, that your flock has highly pathogenic avian influenza.

12-24 Hours

THE “IN-BETWEEN PHASE”

If you received a “presumptive positive,” you will be in contact with NDA and USDA personnel to guide you through the process.

Typically officials wait for USDA confirmation, but in some situations your flock may be depopulated if your birds are “presumptive positive.”

CONFIRMATION

Additional samples will be sent to the USDA NVSL lab for confirmation. This can take time and the wait can be tough, especially as neighbors and other producers notice more traffic on your farm than normal. State and federal officials cannot make any public announcements until the confirmation from USDA is made.

If NVSL confirms HPAI, the next steps can begin and responders will arrive at your farm, if they haven’t already.

You should expect a reimbursement specialist to contact you to discuss the ins and outs of indemnity.

24-72 Hours

FLOCK DEPOPULATION

Federal and state officials will work with you to figure out the best way to depopulate your flock. There will be forms to fill out and information to provide. State and federal officials will help walk you through it.

DISPOSAL

Once the flock is depopulated, the next step is disposal. This is most often completed through composting on your farm.

HOW DID MY BIRDS GET SICK?

In addition to the staff on-site for depopulation and disposal, you will probably hear from other officials to figure out how HPAI infected your flock so we can try to stop the spread.



YOUR ROLE IN HPAI RESPONSE

It All Starts with Biosecurity

Once you suspect that your flock may have avian influenza, make sure you contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at 402-471-2351, the USDA at 866-536-7593, or your local veterinarian. After that, there are steps you will need to take to stop the spread of the virus from your farm. Also, you will need to get your facilities ready for the response and gather information for state and federal officials.

Stop the Spread (0-12 Hours)

While we may not be sure yet how the virus made it into your flock, you need to take extra precautions that the virus does not make it beyond your farm where it can infect another farm. As soon as you complete your notifications, implement these biosecure area protocols:

1. Do not allow workers or service providers to come on your farm and then go to another farm. If you have a gate at the end of your farm lane, close and lock it. If not, consider parking a truck across the end of your lane so vehicles cannot go past.
2. Setup a decontamination line for response vehicles entering and exiting your farm. A hand-pump sprayer with disinfectant for tires and undercarriage is a good start. If you have a power washer, use it.
3. Change clothes and shoes when you move between barns, and wash your hands. Disposable coveralls and shoe covers work well. Wear (K)N95 masks when inside barns.
4. If possible, make sure everyone takes a shower and puts on fresh clothes before leaving your farm.

Facility Preparation & Information Gathering (12-24 Hours)

In order to figure out how the virus got onto your farm, your case manager, an epidemiologist and others will need information from you. Get prepared by gathering the following information:

- Visitor logs (e.g., feed trucks, propane deliveries, vaccine crews, and other service people)
- Mortality records
- Water consumption data

Continue heightened biosecurity and begin preparing your production area for depopulation. Take the following steps:

- Raise feed and water lines.
- Have water hoses ready.
- Figure out the best route for getting on and off your farm and where crews can park in a safe zone.
- Identify areas where you can dispose of the depopulated birds on your premises, if possible.

Self-Care (24-72 Hours)

The first 72 hours of the HPAI response is equivalent to a sprint, but the response efforts that come later are similar to preparing for a marathon. You need to ensure that you, your family, and your workers make self-care a priority to remain healthy during this time.

- Take care of yourself - try to eat and get some sleep.
- It is okay to ask for help. Experiencing mental health challenges can be confusing and frightening. If you need someone to talk to about what is happening, experts are available to help. (Nebraska Rural Response hotline: 800-464-0258; farmhotline.com)
- Monitor yourself, your family, and any workers daily for flu-like symptoms. Report symptoms to your local public health department.

What Does This Mean?

Indemnity: In USDA's efforts to eradicate and control foreign animal diseases, emerging diseases, and program diseases, they are authorized to provide certain benefits and compensation to producers to remove animals that are affected, suspect, or exposed to diseases of concern, and to eliminate dangerous viruses from the environment.

NAHLN: The National Animal Health Laboratory Network is where your birds' initial samples will be taken to determine if they may have avian influenza.

NVSL: The USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa, does the confirmatory testing and will determine what proteins make up the virus, and figure out where in the world the virus strain originated.

For more information, contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at 402-471-2351 or visit nda.nebraska.gov/animal/avian

Adapted with permission from the Delaware Department of Agriculture and Maryland Department of Agriculture