

Avian Influenza Biosecurity Advisory for People Working With Wild Birds, Wild Bird Habitats and Domestic Poultry

In the spring of 2017, H5N2 low pathogenic and highly pathogenic avian influenza virus (HPAI) was confirmed in the United States. In addition, H5N8 HPAI has affected millions of birds outside of North America including the European Union, Asia, India, Africa and Russia.

The H5N2 Avian influenza (AI) in the southern US is of particular concern for Ontario because wild birds that have migrated north for the spring share the same Mississippi flight path. The concern with H5N8 HPAI is that comingling of North American and Eurasian birds will happen this summer in the northern nesting areas. There is potential that this fall, H5N8 HPAI may travel south with our North American wild bird stock.

Avian influenza can infect domesticated and wild birds, including chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, geese, pigeons and guinea fowl. HPAI can remain viable for long periods of time and can cause severe illness and death in domestic birds, especially chickens and turkeys.

Anyone in contact with wild birds and domestic poultry species should ensure that extra caution is taken to reduce the potential for viral transmission.

Birds become infected via the fecal-oral route, through direct contact with secretions or feces from infected birds, or indirectly through contact with contaminated surfaces, infected food and water supplies. It also may be possible for wild birds to transfer the virus mechanically via their feet, feathers or dander. While they may not appear sick, waterfowl are susceptible to infection with avian influenza and can spread the virus. It is unknown if or how H5N2 or H5N8 HPAI will affect wild turkeys or other game birds, thus it is important to maintain vigilance.

If you come across a single large bird, or at least 3 smaller birds, that are dead or sick (ruffled feathers, swollen wattles, discoloration of the feet and impaired balance) notify the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative (<http://www.cwhc-rcsf.ca/>) at 1-866-673-4781. Wild species of particular concern for HPAI are: wild turkeys, waterfowl, shorebirds (including gulls) and raptors.

Avian influenza rarely affects humans that do not have consistent contact with infected birds. Public health authorities stand ready to take precautionary measures as warranted.

Avian influenza does not pose a food safety risk when wild or domestic poultry products are handled and cooked properly. You should always cook game meat thoroughly; poultry should reach an internal temperature of 82°C (180°F) for whole birds and 74°C (165°F) for pieces. To avoid cross-contamination, keep uncooked game in a separate container, away from cooked or ready-to-eat foods

Recommendations for Enhanced Biosecurity Measures for Anyone in Contact with Domestic Poultry Species:

Preparing for the Field

- Wear separate clothing for hunting/ remediation work than for normal wear.
- Put on outer camouflage/work clothing at the hunting/work site (kept in sealed Rubbermaid tote/XXL Ziploc bag in the vehicle).
 - At home, store these clothes in separate containers from normal wear, to reduce the risk of fomite transfer.
- Keep boots for outdoor use separate from other shoes, and only wear them at the site.

In the Field

- If you are handling birds, wear nitrile/ latex gloves.
- Do not harvest or handle wild birds that are obviously sick or found dead. **Please call CWHC at 1-866-673-4781.**
- Dress your game birds in the field whenever possible.
- Use dedicated tools for cleaning game; do not use these tools around your poultry or pet birds.
- Always wear a clean pair of nitrile/latex gloves when cleaning game.
- After dressing the bird, double bag any unwanted parts (including the carcass if applicable). Tie the inner bag, and be sure to take off your gloves and leave them in the outer bag before tying it closed. As you take your gloves off pull them so they are inside out and try not to contaminate your hands or self when you dispose of them. Place the bag in a secure trash can that cannot be accessed by children, pets, poultry or other animals.
- Wash hands with soap and water immediately after handling game. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer or disinfectant wipes.
- First clean (remove all organic matter) and then disinfect all tools and work surfaces. Dispose of any soiled paper towel/rags used.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while cleaning game.

Leaving the Site

- Remove boots and outer gear at the site and put back into a sealed container.
- Clean hands with hand sanitizer or disinfectant wipes before entering the vehicle.
- Wash vehicle when you have left the site, paying particular attention to the undercarriage and tires.
- It is advised not to go onto poultry operations. If you have to, make sure not to go near the production areas or barns.

Carcass and Equipment Handling, Cleaning and Disinfection

- Ensure no visible contamination inside the cab or on the outside of the vehicle.
- Schedule a full or partial wash and disinfection of the vehicle.
- Pay particular attention to the undercarriage, wheel wells, tires and truck bed.
- Use disinfectant on surfaces, ensuring the correct contact time.
- No trash, dirty clothing or footwear, or organic material should be kept in the cab.
- Clean and disinfect the interior of the vehicle on a regular schedule.
- If the carcass is taken to another property for dressing, ensure that the vehicle is fully cleaned then disinfected before it is next used
- If you clean a bird at home, keep a separate pair of shoes to wear only in your game cleaning area. If this is not possible, wear rubber footwear and clean/disinfect your shoes before entering or leaving the area
- Ensure decoys are cleaned with soap and water, then disinfected before storage
- Ensure external clothing and equipment used for handling birds is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected
- After all handling and equipment cleaning is finished, thoroughly wash hands

Additional information is available at:

Biosecurity Recommendations for Small Flock Poultry Owners:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/poultry/facts/12-039.htm>

Free Biosecurity Kit for Your Poultry:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/organic/news/2015/2015-02a2.htm>

How to Prevent and Detect Disease in Backyard Flocks and Pet Birds:

<http://inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/bird-health-basics/eng/1323643634523/1323644740109>

OMAFRA – Avian Influenza Information:

http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/vet/facts/avian_influenza.htm

Agricultural Information Contact Centre:

1-877-424-1300

E-mail: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca

www.ontario.ca/omafra