

## What is avian influenza (AI)?

Avian influenza (AI) is a highly contagious viral disease of birds. It is carried by wild aquatic birds, especially waterfowl, that are not greatly affected by the virus. There are low pathogenic AI viruses (LPAI) that cause mild disease and others that are highly pathogenic (HPAI) that cause severe symptoms, including death. Under some circumstances, a LPAI virus can mutate to become HPAI. Avian influenza in any form is a serious threat to the poultry industry. It can make domesticated birds such as chickens and turkeys very sick and may ultimately lead to high mortality.

## Where does highly pathogenic avian influenza virus reside?

The virus is not highly pathogenic to migratory waterfowl, which means they end up acting as carriers for the virus and can allow it to travel vast distances. When wild birds fly south for the winter months, their migratory pathways take them over much of the United States; they can deposit the virus along the way, contaminating the environment and infecting commercial, backyard and recreational flocks.

## What are the species of wild birds that can carry highly pathogenic avian influenza but not die from it?

Some wild aquatic birds such as gulls, terns, shorebirds, and waterfowl (ducks, geese, swans) are carriers of the avian influenza virus and generally will not exhibit clinical signs when infected. These species are considered reservoirs for avian influenza viruses. Most other birds can become infected, shed the virus, and display clinical symptoms or even death. Poultry and game birds can be easily become infected.

## Can humans contract avian influenza?

The risk of people contracting avian influenza is very low. There have been a few cases of humans contracting avian influenza from wild birds, but these cases are rare. The risk of people contracting avian influenza from commercial poultry is also very low. However, there is a risk of people contracting avian influenza from wild birds that have been in contact with commercial poultry. The risk of people contracting avian influenza from wild birds is higher if they have been in contact with commercial poultry. The risk of people contracting avian influenza from wild birds is higher if they have been in contact with commercial poultry.



What measures can be taken to prevent a poultry flock from contracting avian influenza?

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People must follow all state regulations related to pre-movement testing for all poultry movements at any time. The private sales of poultry and hatching eggs usually are not affected by press releases related to assemblages. However, confirmed cases might change the rules of poultry and poultry product movement in and out of surveillance zones.

What should people do if they find a dead wild bird?

If the cause of death is unknown, contact the Georgia Department of Natural Resources at 706-557-3333.

What happens if highly pathogenic influenza is found in a local poultry flock?

HPAI is considered a foreign animal disease within the United States.

If it was found in a local poultry flock, the Department of Agriculture would take steps to prevent spread to any other birds or flocks in the area. The infected operation would be depopulated as humanely as possible, the dead birds disposed of in a safe manner, and the premises cleaned and disinfected. Simultaneously, all birds within a 6-mile-radius surveillance zone from the infected premises would be tested for presence of the virus. While this response is underway, all bird movements in and out of the zone would fall under specific permitting rules.

Unfortunately, the presence of avian influenza causes suffering in affected birds and disrupts business and bird-related activities. It also disrupts the trade of poultry products in and out of the United States. The U.S. maintains an indemnity program that has helped minimize losses to poultry producers and small flock hobbyists.

In the event that there is a positive case of avian influenza, what is the best way to find at-risk backyard flocks in the area?

Census teams recruited during the response will go door-to-door in the zone established around the infected premises to locate at-risk flocks and provide information to flock owners on what to do if their birds start to show symptoms of AI.

Is there a way to receive notifications when positive cases of avian influenza are confirmed in other states?

Lists of confirmed cases in either domestic flocks or wild birds can be found on the [USDA-APHIS website](#) under avian influenza:

[Confirmations of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Commercial and Backyard Flocks](#)  
[Detections of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Wild Birds](#)

What is the best method for backyard flock owners to dispose of dead birds infected with avian influenza?

The response team will be responsible for determining the best method of disposal. If avian influenza is suspected, please contact the [Avian Influenza Hotline](#) at 770-766-6850 **before** anything is done with the dead birds.

**Reporting is critical** to the success of the response and control of this virus.

What are the protocols for dealing with other animals that are within the control area surrounding premises infected with avian influenza?

Non-avian species of animals are not susceptible to HPAI; however, these animals or equipment associated with them may be able to physically carry and transfer the virus. For the first 24–48 hours after confirmation of HPAI,

