



## **HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA FAQ**

### **What Is Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)?**

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is an extremely infectious viral disease that occurs naturally in wild birds and can spread to domestic birds.

The virus has led to the disposal of about 48 million poultry in 21 Western and Midwestern states since December of 2014.

No confirmed cases have occurred since June. The virus has not been detected in the Northeast or Connecticut, but there is concern that it may spread to the Northeast during the fall or spring wild bird migration.

### **Is there a public health risk?**

The federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) consider the risk to people to be low, and no human infections have been detected.

The risk to the food supply and consumers is also low, and controls are in place to preclude poultry and eggs from affected flocks from entering the food system. Poultry and eggs that are properly handled and cooked are safe to eat.

### **What kind of birds can the virus affect?**

The virus can infect chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, geese and guinea fowl, as well as a wide variety of wild birds.

### **How many poultry are there in Connecticut?**

There are an estimated 5 million poultry housed on approximately 240 farms in Connecticut. The state is also home to numerous people who own a small number of poultry for exhibition, meat and egg production.

### **What is the state doing to reduce the risk of the virus spreading here?**

The state Department of Agriculture and other state and federal agencies have created a task force that is preparing for a potential incident of HPAI in Connecticut, and is ready to implement a response plan if necessary.

The task force includes the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) – which is responsible for monitoring the wild bird population – the Department of Public Health, the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, and the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory.

The emergency response plan follows these five basic steps:

- **Quarantine** – restricting movement of poultry and poultry-moving equipment into and out of the control area.
- **Eradicate** – depopulate the affected flock(s).
- **Monitor region** – testing wild and domestic birds in a broad area around the quarantine area.
- **Disinfect** – kills the virus in the affected flock locations.
- **Test** – confirm that the poultry farm is free of HPAI.

The task force is also in active, ongoing communication with neighboring states and the U.S Dept. Of Agriculture (USDA) to prepare for the detection of HPAI in Connecticut.

The USDA has experience with the previous three HPAI outbreaks in commercial poultry in the U.S., in 1924, 1983 and 2004. No human illnesses were associated with those incidents, or the current one.

The agriculture department has been conducting outreach about HPAI for several years. The agency is now working with poultry owners to prepare for a potential incident, and is urging them to register their birds with the state.

### **How is the virus spread?**

It is typically spread to poultry from direct contact with wild birds or a contaminated environment. Once established in a domestic poultry flock, it can spread rapidly.

It is also spread by the movement of infected poultry, contaminated poultry equipment, and people who can transfer the virus between farms on their shoes and clothing.

**What should poultry owners do to reduce the risk of its spread?**

Eliminate opportunities for domestic birds to interact with wild birds. Owners of birds should avoid visiting other farms, homes or facilities that also have birds.

Those who must visit another premises with poultry should practice strict bio-security measures, such as wearing clean clothes and shoes, and keeping vehicles clean and free of dirt, manure and other organic material.

In addition, knowing the signs to look for and monitoring the health of birds on a regular basis is very important.

Signs to look for include:

- Unusual, high mortality of birds
- Nasal discharge
- Respiratory distress
- Swelling around the head, eyes and neck
- Decreased consumption of food and water
- A drop in egg production

Poultry owners are being urged to register their birds or flocks with the state, and can do so by going to the homepage of the Dept. of Agriculture's website: [CTGrown.gov](http://CTGrown.gov).

Poultry owners may also call the Dept. of Agriculture at 860-713-2504.

**Who can I contact to register my flock or if I suspect my poultry are infected?**

Poultry owners may call the state Department of Agriculture at 860-713-2504, or the USDA's toll-free number at 1-866-536-7593.

**Who can I contact if I find a dead wild bird that I suspect may be carrying the virus?**

Any concerns about wild birds should be forwarded to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Wildlife Division at 860-424-3011, or by clicking on [www.cfwwildbirdmortalityreporting.ct.gov/](http://www.cfwwildbirdmortalityreporting.ct.gov/)