

Avian influenza and small-flock poultry

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza (AI), sometimes called “avian flu” or “bird flu,” is a contagious viral disease that affects the respiratory, digestive and/or nervous systems of many bird species, including domestic poultry and wild birds.

Risks for small-flock poultry:

Wild birds can carry avian influenza, and they can pose a risk to your poultry. Avian influenza can cause severe illness and death in your flock.

Did you know...?

When wild birds migrate, it increases your poultry's risk of being exposed to disease!

During the migration of wild water birds, the risk increases because there's a greater chance your flock could come into contact with wild birds. Wild birds

rarely show visible signs of the disease, but they can spread the virus to other birds or in the environment through their droppings, and through their mouth and nose.

If your birds contract avian influenza, it can also create a greater risk of the disease spreading to neighbouring flocks or to commercial poultry.

How to help protect your flock:

You can take steps to reduce the risk to your flock from avian influenza, such as reducing or eliminating contact with wild birds.

Reduce contact with wild birds:

- Keep your flock away from dugouts and other surface water.
- Keep birds inside or penned, if possible.
- Keep wild birds away from your feeders and waterers (such as through netting or wire fencing), or feed your birds inside. Clean up spilled feed so it doesn't attract wild birds.

Did you know...?

“Biosecurity” means steps you can take to protect animals, people, or plants from harmful organisms, such as viruses like avian influenza.

Viruses can be transmitted by people, poultry and other animals, equipment, and in the environment.

- Clean your hands, clothing and footwear before and after handling birds.
- Don't share equipment with other bird owners.
- Consider limiting visitors' access to your birds.
- Ensure the feed and water you use is free from wild bird droppings, or use a water treatment program like chlorination.

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If you see signs of disease:

Call your local veterinarian.

Spotting avian influenza and reporting it quickly is critical to protect your birds and other flocks. If you see any symptoms, contact your veterinarian so action is taken as soon as possible. In fact, there is a legal requirement to notify a veterinarian or the government if you suspect a serious disease like AI.

Alberta Agriculture also has a program where small-flock owners or their veterinarians can submit birds for disease testing, **at no cost**. Call 403-948-8575 to find out how to participate.

Symptoms to watch for:

- Sudden drop in egg production.
- Swelling around the head, neck and eyes.
- Coughing, gasping, sneezing, diarrhea.
- Trembling, lack coordination, odd head position.
- Changes in food and water consumption.
- Sudden death or a large number of deaths.

Symptoms can vary, so it's better to be cautious and report any birds that might be sick.

**Know the risks. Take action.
Report signs of disease.**

**Help protect your poultry and
the small-flock community.**

To contact the Office of Alberta's Chief Provincial Veterinarian about avian influenza, call 780-427-3448. You can call toll-free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000.

More biosecurity tips:

- Alberta Agriculture and Forestry brochure <http://bit.ly/1JoLfNr>
- Alberta Veterinary Medical Association www.abvma.ca/biosecurity/smallflock.asp
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) <http://bit.ly/1UfCyYZ>

Did you know...?

Alberta small-flock poultry owners are required to have a Premises Identification (PID) Number.

PID links animals with a location, and it can be used to contact animal owners in the case of an emergency, like a natural disaster or disease outbreak.

To register, visit
www.agriculture.alberta.ca/premises

