



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURE**

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January 25, 2022

Greetings and Happy New Year from the Poultry and Animal Health Section at the Delaware Department of Agriculture! We hope this letter finds you and your families safe and in good health.

**Our Mission at the Department of Agriculture is to provide Delaware poultry owners with important information and resources to keep their flocks healthy.** When we become aware of disease threats to poultry in our region, we make every effort to share that information with you so you know how to prevent a disease outbreak.



To assist with these notifications, we are asking every registered backyard flock owner in Delaware to update their information. Due to the importance of timeliness in informing poultry owners of potential disease threats, we would prefer to contact you by cellphone, landline, and/or email. Putting together mailings and waiting on the letter to get to you only delays the response and increases the possibility of an avian disease spreading in our poultry community. We will only use this information to contact you regarding a potential disease threat to your backyard flock. To update your contact information, please call Allison at 302-698-8589 or email her at [allison.culver@delaware.gov](mailto:allison.culver@delaware.gov).

Recent detections of avian influenza in the wild birds migrating through the Atlantic Flyway make it critical that you review the information in the following pages to keep your flock safe. We also encourage you to visit our website for more details on flock health at [agriculture.delaware.gov](http://agriculture.delaware.gov). Lastly, if you are on social media (Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter), you can follow us @AgricultureDE. Social media is a resource we use to share animal health and pertinent disease information.

Don't forget to update your contact information and if you have any questions about your flock, please call don't hesitate to give us a call at (302) 698-8589.

Best regards,

State Veterinarian  
Heather L. Hirst, DVM MS



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## **ANIMAL HEALTH ADVISORY**

From the Office of the Delaware State Veterinarian  
January 25, 2022

**Avian influenza in our region:** A strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI H5N1) was detected in North America for the first time since 2015. The virus was found in wild birds in Canada and the United States in the Atlantic Flyway during the last several weeks. While this virus has NOT been in U.S. poultry since 2015, HPAI can be transmitted from wild birds to domestic poultry if flock owners do not take measures to keep their birds safe.

- Canada – December 2021: Newfoundland had two seagulls test positive for HPAI H5N1. Canada also had a 400-bird exhibition flock of domestic birds and a small 17-bird backyard flock infected. Nearly all the birds died as a result of the infection with H5N1.
- United States – January 2022: North Carolina and South Carolina had three wild birds harvested by hunters test positive for HPAI H5N1.

**What does this mean for your flock?** Delaware is in the Atlantic Flyway, where wild birds migrate North and South (see black waterfowl in Figure 1.). We know poultry in Delaware are at risk from exposure to the manure (droppings) of wild waterfowl and seabirds. Even though wild birds do not usually show illness, they can shed the virus in their manure in high numbers. If you step in wild waterfowl manure containing HPAI virus with your farm shoes and then enter the area where your birds spend time, they may ingest manure from the ground where you walked with your soiled boots. Consuming just a small amount of wild bird manure can infect your flock.



*Figure 1. North American Waterfowl Flyways*

### **What Can You Do?**

#### **Keep your poultry away from wild ducks and geese**

1. **Keep your poultry away** from wild ducks and geese and their environment: ponds, lakes, and swampy areas.
2. Restrict your small flock from sharing their habitat with wild waterfowl by maintaining outdoor enclosures with solid roofs and wire mesh or netted sides.
3. Provide feed and water in an indoor or covered area.

**Say no to goose POOP!** Did you know that you can track the HPAI virus back to your flock if you are hunting or hiking in a wild waterfowl environment where manure from wild birds is everywhere? Do not allow your flock

to access surface water that could potentially be contaminated with wild bird manure. Restrict access to your property and post a biosecurity sign, so others do not introduce infected manure from wild waterfowl.

**Sourcing new birds:** When adding birds to your flock, make sure to purchase them from a reputable source. Keep new birds or returning show birds separated from your established home flocks for 30 days. Keep pests (rodents, raccoons, opossums, rabbits) out of bird pens. Keep visitors out of your bird areas because you don't know what they may be carrying on their feet, clothing, or vehicles! If you must have visitors out to see your flock, be sure they wear clean footwear and clothes.

**Keep it CLEAN:**

1. Wash your hands before and after working with your birds to reduce the chance of spreading infectious particles.
2. Clean any equipment or bird housing/coops before bringing them onto your property.
3. Wear designated farm shoes and clothing when caring for your birds.
4. Change birds' food and water daily.
5. Wash your vehicles and trailers after visiting other poultry facilities and before you return home - go through a car wash.

**Know the Signs of HPAI:**

- Sudden death
- Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing, and/or runny nose
- Swelling around the eyes, neck, and head
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs and legs (Pictures 1 and 2)
- Tremors, drooping wings, circling, twisting of head and neck, or any combination
- Watery, green diarrhea
- Lack of energy, poor appetite
- Drop in egg production or soft or thin-shelled, misshapen eggs



*Picture 1. Discolored comb and wattles*



*Picture 2. Discolored legs*

**If you have sick or dying birds, please do not hesitate to call DDA for free advice and assistance.**

**Delaware Department of Agriculture: (302) 698-4500**

**After-hours emergency: (302) 233-1480**