



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURE**

## **SITUATION UPDATE**

**September 23, 2022**

# **Two Kent County Backyard Flocks Test Presumptive Positive for Avian Influenza**

## **UPDATE**

Preliminary testing of two non-poultry backyard flocks in Kent County, Del., has returned presumptive positive H5 avian influenza from the University of Delaware's Lasher Laboratory in Georgetown, part of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network. Additional samples have been sent to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Veterinary Services Laboratory for further confirmation.

State officials have quarantined all affected premises, and birds on the properties have been depopulated to prevent the spread of the disease. Birds from affected flocks will not enter the food system.

Avian influenza is a highly contagious airborne respiratory virus that spreads quickly among birds through nasal and eye secretions and manure. The virus can be spread from flock to flock, including wild birds, through contact with infected poultry, equipment, and on the clothing and shoes of caretakers. This virus affects poultry, like chickens, ducks, and turkeys, and some wild bird species, such as ducks, geese, shorebirds, and raptors.

## **BACKGROUND**

Over the past six weeks, highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 has been confirmed in the Atlantic Flyway, of which Delaware is a part, including flocks in neighboring states. With the southerly migration of waterfowl underway, all commercial and backyard flock owners need to increase their vigilance in protecting their flocks from contracting avian influenza.

The avian influenza cases previously announced in February and March 2022 in New Castle County and Kent County have all been declared disease-free and have returned to production.

Key biosecurity practices:

- **Clean and disinfect vehicles.** Don't walk through or drive trucks, tractors, or equipment in areas where waterfowl or other wildlife feces may be. If you can't avoid this, clean your shoes, vehicle, and equipment thoroughly to prevent bringing disease agents back to your flock. This is especially important when visiting with farmers or those who hunt wildfowl, such as when gathering at a local coffee shop, restaurant, or gas station.

- **Remove loose feed.** Don't give wild birds, rodents, and insects a free lunch! Remove spilled or uneaten feed immediately and ensure feed storage units are secure and free of holes. Wild birds can carry HPAI.
- **Keep visitors to a minimum.** Only allow those who take care of your poultry to come in contact with your birds, including family and friends. Make sure everyone who has contact with your flock follows biosecurity principles.
- **Wash your hands before and after coming in contact with live poultry.** Wash with soap and water (always your first choice). If using hand sanitizer, remove manure, feathers, and other materials from your hands because disinfectants will not penetrate organic matter or caked-on dirt.
- **Provide disposable boot covers (preferred) or disinfectant footbaths for anyone having contact with your flock.** If using a footbath, remove all droppings, mud, or debris from boots and shoes using a long-handled scrub brush BEFORE stepping into the disinfectant footbath, and always keep it clean.
- **Change clothes before entering poultry areas and before exiting the property.** Visitors should wear protective outer garments or disposable coveralls, boots, and headgear when handling birds. Shower out and change clothes when leaving the facility.
- **Clean and disinfect tools or equipment before moving them to a new poultry facility.** Before allowing vehicles, trucks, tractors, or tools and equipment (e.g., egg flats and cases) that have come in contact with birds or their droppings to exit the property, ensure they are cleaned and disinfected to prevent contaminated equipment from transporting disease. Do not move or reuse items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected, such as cardboard egg flats.
- **Look for signs of illness.** Know the [warning signs](#) of infectious bird diseases.

#### **If You Have Sick Poultry or Experience Increased Mortality in Your Flock:**

- Commercial poultry producers should follow the procedures of contacting the company they grow for when they notice signs of disease.
- Delaware backyard flock owners who notice any signs of HPAI in their flock should contact:
  - In **Delaware**, email the Delaware Poultry Health Hotline at [poultry.health@delaware.gov](mailto:poultry.health@delaware.gov) or call 302-698-4507 and provide your contact information, size of flock, location, and concerns.

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