



SITUATION UPDATE: February 26, 2025

Delmarva Response to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

UPDATE

Over the past month, the control areas (CA) for all nine commercial poultry operations on Delmarva have been officially released, with the Worcester County CA being released today. This means that poultry producers of non-infected premises within the 10 km (6.2 mi) radius around the infected flocks are no longer restricted from moving poultry or poultry products off or onto their farms. The infected farms remain under quarantine and are all in various stages of completing the required steps to restore production on the farms.

All poultry farms and backyard flocks on Delmarva should still take precautions and practice strict biosecurity, as the virus load in the wild bird population, especially in snow geese, remains exceptionally high.

Further sequencing of the cases on Delmarva confirmed the H5N1 D1.1 genotype in nine flocks and the H5N1 A3 genotype in one Delaware flock. These genotypes are circulating in the wild bird population, with the D1.1 genotype being the most prevalent. It has been determined that all cases on Delmarva were due to independent wild bird introductions. With a high virus load in the migratory snow goose population and farms continuing to be affected, all poultry producers need to make sure they have dedicated footwear in each house that never goes outside of the individual house, are using foot baths, and reading the product label to ensure enough contact to kill any virus, are sanitizing their hands, and are keeping wild birds away from the farm.

What Does it Take to Release a Control Area?

Each control area is released on its own timeline. In the case of multiple control areas, as we experienced with the two farms in Kent County, Del., farms in the overlapping control areas (premises physically located in more than one infected/buffer zone) will follow the timeline for the last control area scheduled for release.

The following conditions must be met to release a Control Area:

- The infected flock has been depopulated, and the compost piles must be capped.
- Initial virus elimination must be completed for the infected premises.
- Required surveillance testing for commercial and backyard flocks must be completed.

Routine surveillance will continue throughout the state. Even though these control areas have been released, any farm in a control area that did not complete a biosecurity audit and had chicks placed before the control area was closed will still need to do so.

BACKGROUND

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 flocks of wild birds, through contact with infected poultry, equipment, and 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.

IF YOU HAVE SICK POULTRY OR EXPERIENCE INCREASED MORTALITY

- Commercial poultry producers should notify the company they grow for when they notice signs of disease.
- Backyard flock owners who notice any signs of HPAI in their flock should not take dead or sick birds to a lab to be tested or move them off-site. Contact your respective state:
 - In Delaware, email the Delaware Poultry Health Hotline at poultry.health@delaware.gov or call 302-698-4507, and provide your contact information, flock size, location, and concerns.
 - In Maryland, report any unusual or sudden increases to the MDA Animal Health Program at 410-698-4507.
 - In Virginia, report unusual poultry illnesses or deaths to the State Veterinarian's Office at 804.692.0601 or vastatevet@vdacs.virginia.gov.

MEDIA NOTE

All media inquiries should be directed to the Delaware Avian Influenza Joint Information Center at JIC@delaware.gov.

Due to biosecurity concerns, no on-site interviews, photos, or videos are allowed. For more information on avian influenza, visit <https://de.gov/poultry>.

All announcements and pertinent information regarding the HPAI situation on Delmarva will be posted at <https://de.gov/poultry>. Situation updates will be issued for any new cases where a confirmation in a county has already been confirmed. A press release announcing a new case will only occur if HPAI is detected in a new county.

###