



STATE OF DELAWARE

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

2320 SOUTH DUPONT HIGHWAY

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SITUATION UPDATE: Feb. 26, 2026

**Delaware announces presumptive positive
avian influenza case in Kent County commercial flock**

DOVER, Del. — The **Delaware Department of Agriculture** announced today that preliminary testing of a commercial broiler flock in Kent County has returned presumptive positive for H5 HPAI (avian influenza).

State officials have quarantined the affected premises, and the birds on the property are being depopulated to prevent the spread of the disease. Birds from the affected flock 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 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 geese and shorebirds.

This is the second Delaware detection of avian influenza in a commercial flock during the 2025-26 waterfowl migratory season.

The Delaware Department of Agriculture, with the help of the University of Delaware laboratory system, performs active surveillance and testing of birds for avian influenza within the state every day. Surveillance is conducted at commercial poultry operations, exhibition and backyard flocks, and at livestock and poultry auctions.

Key Tips:

All poultry owners should increase their vigilance in protecting their flocks from contracting avian influenza by following these steps:

- Exclude your flock from spaces where wild or migratory birds, especially waterfowl, have access.
- Disinfect equipment, vehicles, footwear, and other items prior to contact with flocks.



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- Isolate any animals with signs of illness and contact your veterinarian.
- Permit only essential workers and vehicles to enter the farm to limit the chances of bringing the virus from an outside source.
- Avoid comingling with other poultry growers or backyard flock owners.
- Limit, monitor and record any movement of people, vehicles or animals on or off your farm.

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 unusual symptoms in their flock should email poultry.health@delaware.gov or call the **Delaware Poultry Health Hotline** at **302-698-4507** and provide your contact information, size of flock, location, and concerns. Find helpful tips here: <https://agriculture.delaware.gov/poultry-animal-health/avian-flu-graphics/>.

If Delaware residents see a sick or dead bird, report sightings through the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife's [sick and injured wildlife reporting form](#).

The H5N1 virus has infected a small number of people across the United States. Division of Public Health (DPH) officials emphasize that the risk to the general population is low. A few individuals may be exposed through their work or through contact with sick wild birds. When such exposures are identified, DPH works with such individuals to take protective measures to protect their health. Poultry and poultry products remain safe to eat when properly handled and cooked. While this detection may be concerning for residents, these response measures are standard practice and are intended to protect animal health, the poultry industry, and public health. DPH recommends that members of our community (especially children, immunocompromised persons, persons with chronic health conditions and pets) should be kept away from wild birds and bird droppings.

Avian Influenza Breakdown:

Avian influenza is caused by an influenza type A virus that can infect poultry (such as



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chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, domestic ducks, geese, and guinea fowl) and is carried by free-flying waterfowl and wild birds, such as ducks, geese, raptors, and shorebirds.

Avian influenza viruses are classified by a combination of two groups of proteins: hemagglutinin or “H” proteins, of which there are 16 (H1–H16), and neuraminidase or “N” proteins, of which there are 9 (N1–N9). Many combinations of “H” and “N” proteins are possible.

Each combination is considered a different subtype and can be further broken down into different strains that circulate within flyways/geographic regions. Avian influenza viruses are further classified by their pathogenicity (low or high) — the ability of a particular virus strain to produce disease in domestic poultry.