

UNDERSTANDING HPAI AND BIOSECURITY FOR BACKYARD POULTRY FLOCKS

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What is HPAI and Why Should You Care?

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is a serious bird disease that has impacted millions of poultry across the U.S. Avian influenza can affect both commercial and backyard poultry flocks. The U.S. poultry industry is one of the largest worldwide. There are more than 378.5 million egg-laying chickens, over 9.4 million broiler chickens and 218 million turkeys. Protecting your flock helps your birds and prevents disease from spreading to neighbors' birds, commercial poultry producers and wildlife.

Current status - February 3, 2025

The current outbreak of HPAI began in February 2022 and has persisted to today. The most current national information can be found on the United States Department of Agriculture – Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (USDA-APHIS) website:

[https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections.](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections)

A total of 1,509 flocks have been impacted with 801 flocks being backyard and 708 being commercial. This has affected 153.64 million birds in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

Here in Indiana, the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) provides the information on HPAI at:

[https://www.in.gov/boah/species-information/avianbirds/highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza/.](https://www.in.gov/boah/species-information/avianbirds/highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza/)

To date, HPAI has been identified in 27 locations across 12 different counties resulting in the loss of 681,256 birds. As the outbreak continues, more poultry losses are expected. However, there are biosecurity practices you should follow to help protect your flock.

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Key Biosecurity Practices

Biosecurity is all about preventing disease from entering or spreading within your flock. There are three main components to good biosecurity:

1. Traffic Control - Managing Who and What Enters Your Coop

- ❑ If you visit places with birds (swap meets, bird shows, etc.), change your clothes and shoes before returning to your flock.
- ❑ Never wear street clothes or shoes in your coop.
- ❑ Keep visitors out or provide them with clean coveralls and boots.
- ❑ Use a bleach-water foot bath to disinfect shoes before entering the coop.

2. Isolation - Keeping Your Birds Separate from Other Animals

- ❑ Keep your flock away from other pets, rodents, and wild birds.
- ❑ Remove dead birds daily and dispose of them properly.
- ❑ Quarantine new or returning birds for at least 21 days before introducing them to your flock.

3. Sanitation - Keeping Everything Clean

- ❑ Clean your coop and nests at least twice a year.
- ❑ If you have a dirt floor, turn over the top 6 inches between flocks.
- ❑ Wash and disinfect feed and water containers weekly.
- ❑ Do not share poultry equipment with others.

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Additionally, there are other best practices that can be used to help minimize the risk of disease and HPAI.

Best Practices

- ❑ **Pest Control:**Keep grass trimmed and remove junk piles to deter rodents.
- ❑ **Airborne Disease Risk:**Some diseases can travel over a mile in the air, so be mindful of your flock's location.
- ❑ **Food Safety:**Store feed in a covered, dry area and buy only what you need for 3-4 weeks.
- ❑ **Water Safety:**Add chlorine (1 tbsp of household bleach per ½ gallon of water) to your birds' drinking water to keep it clean.
- ❑ **Choring (Daily Tasks):**Always tend to younger and healthier birds first, then care for sick or quarantined birds last.

Protect Your Flock and Community

We encourage you to register your farm with the Premises Identification Program. This BOAH program helps ensure that in the event of a disease outbreak, authorities can quickly locate and manage affected farms. This is an essential biosecurity measure to help control the spread of HPAI and other diseases. For more information on how to register for a Premises ID, please visit the following website: [Premises ID Registration](#).

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Signs of HPAI and who to contact

HPAI can cause sudden death in birds without warning. Other clinical signs include:

- ❑ Lack of energy and appetite
- ❑ Decreased egg production and/or the production of soft-shelled or misshapen eggs
- ❑ Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks
- ❑ Purple discoloration of combs, wattles, and legs
- ❑ Nasal discharge, coughing, or sneezing
- ❑ Incoordination and diarrhea

If you notice any of these signs in your flock, immediately contact the USDA APHIS at 1-866-536-7593 for assistance and further steps.

Your commitment to biosecurity can mean the difference between a thriving flock and a devastating outbreak. Protect your birds, protect your neighbors, and be part of the solution in stopping HPAI.