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Protecting Alberta Small Flock Poultry from Avian Influenza – Spring 2022

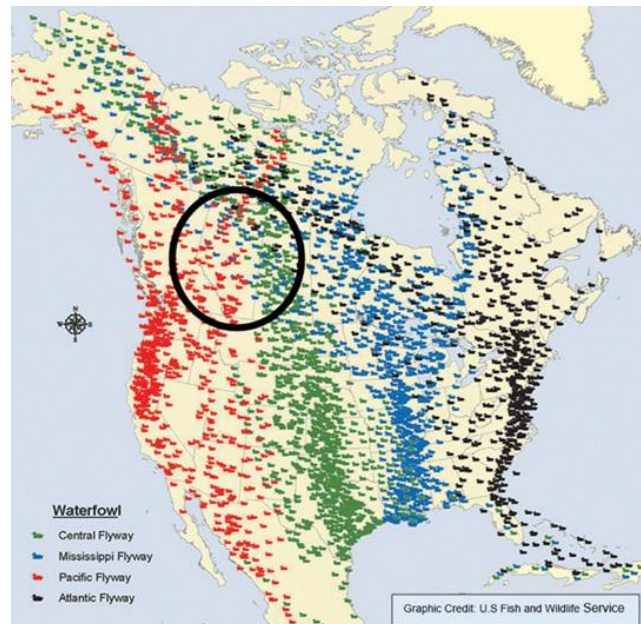
Avian Influenza (AI) has recently been detected in Canada.

It is important for backyard/small-flock keepers to be aware of this disease and take extra measures to protect your flocks during this coming spring migration.

What is it? Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is a highly contagious respiratory virus of birds. HPAI has been recently detected in migratory waterfowl, backyard flocks and commercial poultry flocks in eastern Canada, the eastern USA, and more recently in Vancouver. This disease is reportable because it can kill large numbers of birds in a short time. Currently there are no approved vaccines or treatments for HPAI in Canada. HPAI has the potential to infect humans, and it can result in restrictions of the sale and movement of Canadian poultry.

This Spring is a Season with Increased Avian Influenza Risk

- Wild migratory waterfowl are known to carry AI viruses.
- Influenza viruses often do not cause illness in waterfowl, however certain strains can cause severe illness and death in domestic poultry. **The Eurasian strain of AI that has been detected along the Eastern coast of Canada, eastern US, and in Vancouver; causing rapid death with limited signs of illness other than a reduction in activity**
- Massive movement of wild birds during migration increases the risk of AI transmission to poultry farms. **Birds from the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Pacific flyways can cross over the province of Alberta and spread disease to poultry in our province.**
- AI can be transmitted to domestic flocks through direct contact with wild birds **or their droppings**, or through contaminated water supplies.





What to Watch for:

- Sudden drop in flock egg production.
- Swelling of the head, neck and/or eyes.
- Coughing, gasping, sneezing, nasal discharge, bloody diarrhea.
- Trembling, lack of coordination, odd head position.
- Changes in food and water consumption.
- Sudden death and/or a large number of deaths.

Symptoms can vary, and can look like those of other respiratory diseases, so it's better to be cautious and report any birds that might be sick.

If you suspect HPAI:

- **Call your flock veterinarian**
- **Call the Government of Alberta Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian (1-800-524-0051)**, to discuss your situation and have your dead bird(s) submitted to the Non-Quota, Non-Commercial poultry disease surveillance program at no cost. For more information about this program, go to: <https://www.alberta.ca/non-quota-or-non-commercial-poultry-disease-investigations.aspx>
- **Call your local (federal) Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) office**
- **Initiate a self-quarantine** (do not let any birds move on or off your premises; restrict visitors)



What puts YOUR small/backyard flock at higher risk of AI?

- Outdoor housing and/or free-ranging
- Your property is near a body of water (migratory waterfowl)
- Your flock has access to wildlife (especially ducks and geese)
- Your flock has multiple species of birds, especially waterfowl

How You Can Minimize Your Risk: Biosecurity is Your Best Defense!

- Use dedicated footwear/boots while accessing your flock
- Limit visitors to your premises
- Ensure your poultry are confined to a predator-proofed run **with a roof or netting** to keep wild birds out
- Prevent contact with wildlife, and do not allow wildlife access to your poultry feeders/waterers
- Clean and disinfect regularly
- Dispose of dead birds properly, by burial, composting, or incineration
- Keep your PID information up to date so as to receive timely notices of disease outbreaks in your region

For more information, please go to <https://inspection.canada.ca/flock-protection> or use this QR code for the most up to date **CFIA information** on how to protect your small flock from AI.

