



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of Marketing, Animal Industries and Consumer Services

Wes Moore, Governor

Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor

Kevin M. Atticks, Secretary

Steven A. Connelly, Deputy Secretary

Animal Health

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The Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. Building
50 Harry S Truman Parkway
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

410-841-5810 Baltimore/Washington
410-841-5999 Fax

On Friday, January 3, 2025, Delaware Department of Agriculture announced that preliminary testing of a commercial broiler flock in Kent County, DE, returned presumptive positive H5 from the University of Delaware's Lasher Laboratory in Georgetown, part of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network. Additional samples were sent to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) and were confirmed positive.

The affected premises are currently under quarantine and the birds on the property were depopulated to prevent further spread of the disease.

H5N1 detections in migrating wild birds continue, and these recent detections should act as a reminder that a virulent strain of Avian Influenza virus continues to circulate in the wild bird population and continues to be introduced into commercial and backyard poultry throughout the U.S.

Due to the recent and ongoing detections, we urge you to remain vigilant in protecting your flock, as well as those around you.

Maryland Department of Agriculture Animal Health is currently recommending heightened biosecurity focusing on preventing contact of poultry with wild birds and with dairy cattle. We recommend moving poultry to indoor housing or covered outdoor enclosures during this time of increased risk. You take the following steps to decrease the spread of the virus:

- Limit, monitor, and record any movement of people, vehicles, or animals on and off your farm.
- Permit only essential workers and vehicles to enter the farm to limit the chances of bringing in the virus from an outside source.
- Avoid visiting other poultry farms and any unnecessary travel off the farm.
- Disinfect equipment, vehicles, footwear, and other items that come into contact with flocks. In farms with more than one species (those with cows, birds, horses, etc.) please disinfect each area separately and treat each area as a separate premise.
- Keep your flock away from wild or migratory birds, especially waterfowl. If you have an indoor space (NOT in your house), we recommend moving them until the risk of the virus is lowered. If you do not have indoor housing, you can cover your outdoor enclosure with tarps or other materials to limit wild bird droppings and contact.
- Isolate any ill animals and contact your veterinarian.

Here are signs of HPAI in birds and what to look for:

- Sudden death without any prior symptoms of illness
- Lack of energy and appetite
- A drop in egg production or soft-shelled, misshapen eggs
- Swelling of the eyelids, comb, wattles, and shanks
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, comb, and legs
- Gasping for air (difficulty breathing)
- Nasal discharge, coughing, sneezing
- Twisting of the head and neck (torticollis)
- Stumbling or falling down
- Diarrhea

More information can be found on the USDA

website: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza>

If you have **sick** poultry or experience **increased mortality (deaths)** in your flock:

- Commercial poultry producers should follow the procedures of contacting the company they grow for when they notice signs of disease
- Maryland backyard flock owners who notice any of the signs of HPAI in their flock should:
 - Email the Maryland Department of Agriculture Animal Health team at md.birdflu@maryland.gov or animalhealth.mda@maryland.gov or call 410.841.5810
 - Provide your contact information, size of flock, location, and concerns
 - Please **DO NOT** take dead or sick birds to the lab to be tested or move them off-site. We can discuss if samples need to be taken and next steps.

For assistance with wild bird mitigation, please contact USDA Wildlife Services at 866.487.3297.

To report **sick or dead wild** birds, please contact the Maryland Department of Natural Resources at 877.620.8367

We appreciate your cooperation during this time.

Thank you,



Dr Jennifer P Trout, DVM
Maryland State Veterinarian