



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

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading Industry
mda.maryland.gov

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

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

December 18, 2024

Dear Maryland Poultry Producers:

For the last several years, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI H5N1) has been circulating in the wild bird population in the United States, with a disease outbreak identified in a commercial poultry flock in February 2022. Since then, HPAI H5N1 has been identified in 1,289 flocks, including 575 commercial poultry and 714 backyard flocks, affecting more than 121 million birds. There have been detections in forty-nine states making trade restrictions due to infected flocks widespread. **In the past 30 days, 90 confirmed flocks have been reported, with more than 15.8 million birds affected.**

On March 25, 2024, USDA reported that HPAI H5N1 had been confirmed in four dairy cattle herds, two herds in Texas and two herds in Kansas. Dairy cattle in the herds were exhibiting a decrease in milk production in addition to other clinical signs. As of December 13, 2024, the number of cases in dairy cattle herds has increased to 860 confirmed cases in 17 states. **In the past 30 days, 339 new cases have been confirmed in dairy herds in two states.** USDA has reported there is evidence the virus has spread from infected dairy cattle to poultry.

Additionally, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has reported 58 confirmed human cases of HPAI to date with 56 of those cases having exposure to poultry or dairy cattle.

Continued HPAI H5N1 detections in migrating wild birds 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. As Maryland is home to many mixed species farms, these findings of the virus in dairy cattle have added a new level of concern, especially for poultry housed outdoors. The evidence of transmission of the virus from dairy cattle to poultry highlights the need to maintain separation of poultry from dairy animals.

Based on this information, the Maryland Department of Agriculture is recommending, if possible, maintaining poultry indoors during this period of heightened risk. Additionally, all producers should assess the risk to their poultry and make informed decisions about allowing outdoor access. The Department will assess risk again in early April 2025 to offer further recommendations.

Producers are also encouraged to continue implementing strict biosecurity practices, monitor bird health, and report any unexplained mortality and morbidity in a flock to the Department's 24/7 reporting line at 410-841-5810. Producers with co-located dairy cattle should monitor the health of these animals, consider routine bulk tank testing for HPAI, and contact the Department with concerns.

Lastly, it is also recommended that any producer who notices black vultures, hawks or wild waterfowl near a poultry premise maintain their flock indoors. Any dead wild birds should be reported to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources at 877-620-8367 or USDA Wildlife Services at 844-820-2234.

Thank you for your continued vigilance in keeping Maryland's flocks safe.

Sincerely,

Dr Jennifer P Trout, DVM
State Veterinarian