

Avian Influenza Biosecurity Advisory for People Working with Wild birds and Wild Bird Habitat

As of April 24, 2015, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has confirmed the presence of a H5N2 highly pathogenic avian influenza virus (HPAI) on three commercial poultry farms in Oxford County, Ontario. The risk is not confined to Oxford County as this virus has been spreading across North America.

Avian influenza (AI) can infect domesticated and wild birds, including chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, geese, pigeons and guinea fowl. HPAI can remain viable for long periods of time at low environmental temperatures, and cause severe illness and death in domestic birds, especially chickens and turkeys. Anyone in contact with domestic poultry species should ensure that extra caution is taken to reduce viral transmission, with enhanced biosecurity measures.

Birds become infected via the fecal-oral route, through direct contact with secretions or feces from infected birds, or indirectly through contact with contaminated surfaces, infected food and water supplies. It also may be possible for wild birds to transfer the virus mechanically via their feet, feathers or dander. While they may not appear sick, waterfowl are susceptible to infection with avian influenza and can spread the virus. It is unknown if or how H5N2 HPAI will affect wild turkeys or other game birds, thus it is important to maintain vigilance.

If you come across a single large bird, or at least 3 smaller birds, that are dead or sick (ruffled feathers, swollen wattles, discoloration of the feet and impaired balance) notify the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative (<http://www.cwhc-rscf.ca/>) at 1-866-673-4781. Wild species of particular concern for HPAI are: wild turkeys, waterfowl, shorebirds (including gulls) and raptors. If the birds are found within a CFIA designated quarantine zone for HPAI, contact CFIA directly at 519-691-0615.

Avian influenza does not pose a food safety risk when wild or domestic poultry products are handled and cooked properly. You should always cook game meat thoroughly; poultry should reach an internal temperature of 82°C (180°F) for whole birds and 74°C (165°F) for pieces. To avoid cross-contamination, keep uncooked game in a separate container, away from cooked or ready-to-eat foods. People who do not have consistent contact with infected birds are rarely affected. Public health authorities stand ready to take precautionary measures as warranted.

Additional information is available at:

Biosecurity Recommendations for Small Flock Poultry Owners:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/poultry/facts/12-039.pdf>

Free Biosecurity Kit for Your Poultry:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/organic/news/2015/2015-02a2.htm>

How to Prevent and Detect Disease in Backyard Flocks and Pet Birds:

<http://inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/bird-healthbasics/eng/1323643634523/1323644740109>

Avian Influenza investigation in Ontario – 2015 :

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/ai/2015-investigation-ontario/eng/1428441187420/1428441189060>

OMAFRA – Avian Influenza Information:

http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/vet/facts/avian_influenza.htm

CFIA Quarantine Control Zone Map:

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/ai/2015-investigation-ontario/ontario-2015/eng/1429917904654/1429918780666>

Agricultural Information Contact Centre:

1-877-424-1300

E-mail: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca

www.ontario.ca/omafra