



## State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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Dear Backyard Flock Poultry Owner:

Between the months of February and May 2025, New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) reported eight premises with detections of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in domestic poultry. Two of these were in backyard-raised poultry, in Salem and Atlantic County, and six were in live bird markets. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) confirms that the HPAI virus has been found in wild birds within 16 counties of New Jersey this year. Most recently, state officials detected the disease in black vultures in Somerset County. Exposure to infected wild birds via direct contact or sharing waterers, feeders, or swimming areas is a potential source of disease transmission to domestic poultry. As the fall season of wild bird migration begins, NJDA would like to remind New Jersey poultry owners of their important role in monitoring, reporting, and preventing disease.

HPAI is highly contagious and often fatal in domestic poultry species. Signs of HPAI in poultry can include:

- Sudden death
- Decrease in feed or water consumption
- Respiratory signs such as coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge
- Swelling around the eyes
- Open-mouth breathing
- Darkening of the comb/wattles
- Reddening of the shanks or feet
- Decreased egg production
- Lethargy

HPAI spreads through contact with bodily secretions from the feces, eyes, nostrils, and mouths of infected birds. The virus can spread on vehicles, equipment, shoes, etc. Biosecurity is particularly important for those residents of New Jersey who keep backyard poultry flocks, which are typically smaller flocks and can include mixed bird types. Backyard flocks often have direct encounters with wild birds or their feces. Wild birds can enter backyard flock housing, increasing this risk. Practicing good biosecurity can help prevent the spread of HPAI onto a farm.

### **Recommended biosecurity practices include:**

- Eliminate exposure of domestic birds to wild birds.
  - Minimize standing water and extra feed in the environment
  - Cover accumulated waste on the property
  - Plug or patch any access holes into poultry housing
  - Add wildlife deterrents
- Avoid contact with other poultry.
- Keep a specific set of shoes and clothing for tending to poultry. Disposable boot covers or a foot bath that is changed regularly are other measures that can be used.

- Minimize the number of people who visit the birds.
- Avoid sharing equipment with other flocks.
- Use appropriate disinfectants for equipment and vehicles that must enter and exit the farm.

Poultry owners are urged to review their biosecurity practices now and remain on alert for clinical signs of HPAI in their flock. Multi-species operations, particularly those with both poultry and ruminants on-site, are encouraged to mitigate areas in which the spread of disease between species may be at risk.

Online resources can help you tailor a farm-specific biosecurity plan:

- [Secure Milk Supply- Biosecurity](https://securemilksupply.org/milk-producers/biosecurity/) - <https://securemilksupply.org/milk-producers/biosecurity/>,
- [CFSPH - Biosecurity](https://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/biosecurity/) - <https://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/biosecurity/>
- [USDA Defend the Flock](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock) - <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock>
- [USDA Prevent Avian Influenza at Your Farm Wildlife Biosecurity](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/hpaifactsheet_wildlife-biosecurity.pdf) - [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/hpaifactsheet\\_wildlife-biosecurity.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/hpaifactsheet_wildlife-biosecurity.pdf)
- USDA Wildlife Services (908-735-5654) can assist with wild bird mitigation plans on agricultural premises.

The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) advise individuals to use personal protective equipment (PPE) when in contact with sick or dead birds. PPE is available at each county's Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office. The county office contact information can be found at <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/>. The NJDA continues to work closely with the NJDOH, NJDEP, and other state and federal partners to monitor the current H5N1 situation and coordinate disease control and elimination measures.

HPAI is a reportable disease. If you suspect HPAI in your poultry, please alert the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Division of Animal Health at 609-671-6400.

Sincerely,



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