



---

## FOOD AND AGRICULTURE REGIONAL MEMBER (FARM) POLICY COMMITTEE

### AVIAN INFLUENZA: INFORMATION FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The following guidance was informed by remarks from Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Kevin Atticks, Deputy Commissioner Charles Green, Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Dr. David Crum, Maryland Department of Health (MDH) State Public Health Veterinarian, and Dr. Jennifer Trout, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) State Veterinarian, during the [February 14th FARM Policy Committee Meeting](#) panel presentation: Avian Influenza's Impact on Agriculture and Society. Speaker guidance was supplemented with additional resources from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

#### Key Takeaways:

- Avian Influenza (AI) is endemic in wild birds. While we cannot control wild birds, we can implement biosecurity and public health measures to mitigate risks to backyard flocks, people, and commercial farms.
- Our food supply is safe. Eggs, poultry<sup>1</sup>, and pasteurized milk are safe for human consumption and rigorously tested, whether bought directly from an authorized farm, at a store, or at a farmers market<sup>2</sup>. Beef is not currently a concern.
- AI infection in humans is currently considered an occupational hazard and has primarily been seen in people who have prolonged unprotected contact (no PPE) with poultry, wild birds, and/or dairy cows. There is not evidence of person-to-person transmission.
- If you suspect human AI infection, report it to your local health department immediately. For animal issues, contact the numbers below. **Do not bring sick or dead animals to be tested, report the suspected infection and officials will come to you.**
  - MD Department of Natural Resource's USDA Wildlife Services: 877-463-6497
  - MDA Animal Health Program: 410-841-5810

---

<sup>1</sup> Eggs and poultry can be safe to eat if you handle and cook them properly. Cooking poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165F kills bacteria and viruses, including bird flu. More information regarding food safety and bird flu can be found [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Producers in Maryland that sell eggs at farmers markets are enrolled in the NPIP – [National Poultry Improvement Plan Program](#). They undergo routine testing and biosecurity programs and audits are in place. They are being monitored continuously to ensure eggs or meat sold at farmers markets is safe.

### Keep Informed:

- Register backyard or school-based flocks with the **Maryland Poultry Premises Registration** (**not** limited to MD-based flocks). Registrants are added to a distribution list and will receive updates on outbreaks and reminders of biosecurity recommendations: <https://mda.maryland.gov/AnimalHealth/pages/poultry-reg-faq.aspx>
- **USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service** has a "Defend the Flock" resource center with social media resources, checklists, and toolkits geared towards disease prevention: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock/resources>
- **CDC'S Healthy Pets, Healthy People** website has a page focused on Backyard Poultry with helpful resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-pets/about/backyard-poultry.html>

### Use Evidence-Based Biosecurity Practices<sup>3</sup>:

- **Be cautious if you have been around wildfowl.** Don't walk or drive through areas where waterfowl or other wildlife feces may be. If you can't avoid this, clean your shoes (or ideally, use different shoes), vehicle, and equipment thoroughly to prevent bringing disease agents back to your flock. This is especially important when visiting with farmers, those who hunt wildfowl, or those who hike in areas with wildfowl.
- **Keep poultry feed and water secure.** Remove loose feed and make sure feed storage units are secure and free of holes. If you have multiple coops, make sure each coop has its own water and feeder.
- **Keep visitors to a minimum.** Only allow those people who take care of your poultry to come in contact with your birds, including family and friends. Make sure everyone follows biosecurity principles.
- **Wash your hands before and after coming in contact with live poultry.** Wash with soap and water. If using hand sanitizer, first remove manure, feathers, and other materials from your hands. Help young children thoroughly wash their hands.
- **Wear personal protective equipment or clothing and shoes that you only use when caring for your poultry.** This includes boot covers or boots that can be disinfected. If using a footbath, be sure to remove all droppings, mud, or debris from boots and shoes **BEFORE** stepping into the disinfectant footbath and always keep it clean.
  - If you have multiple coops, have a footbath for each coop.
  - If a wet footbath is not feasible, use a dry footbath with a disinfectant spray.
- **Do not touch dead birds.** If you do have unprotected contact, call your health department so they can conduct a risk assessment to determine if further action is necessary (monitoring, testing, etc.).

### Know the Signs of Infection:

#### Signs in Poultry

- Sudden death

#### Symptoms in Humans

- Eye redness and irritation

---

<sup>3</sup> A comprehensive list of biosecurity practices can be viewed, and shared, at [USDA APHIS's Defend the Flock Resource Center](#).

- Decrease in feed or water consumption
  - Respiratory signs such as coughing, sneezing, nasal and ocular discharge
  - Swelling around the eyes
  - Open-mouth breathing
  - Darkening of the comb/wattles
  - Reddening of the shanks or feet
  - Decreased egg production
  - Lethargy
- (conjunctivitis)
  - Mild fever (<100°F) or feeling feverish
  - Cough
  - Sore throat
  - Runny or stuff nose
  - Muscle or body aches
  - Headaches