



AVIAN INFLUENZA

FACT SHEET

WHAT IS AVIAN INFLUENZA?

Avian influenza (AI) is an influenza type A virus that infects domestic poultry, fowl and birds, such as chickens, turkeys, pheasants, ducks, geese and guinea fowl.

There are many strains of the AI virus. Based on the severity of illness caused by the virus, these strains are put into two classifications, low pathogenic and highly pathogenic.

Low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) virus strains occur naturally in wild migratory waterfowl and shorebirds without causing illness. LPAI can infect domestic poultry, creating little or no signs of illness. However, some strains are highly pathogenic or capable of mutating to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) under certain field conditions. HPAI virus strains are extremely infectious, often fatal to chickens, and can spread rapidly from flock-to-flock.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Signs of AI infection may differ based on the strain. Signs and symptoms of AI infected birds may include:

- Sudden death without clinical signs
- Lack of energy and appetite
- Decreased egg production
- Soft-shelled or misshapen eggs
- Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles and hocks
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs and legs
- Nasal discharge
- Coughing and sneezing
- Incoordination
- Diarrhea

Birds infected with LPAI may show few to no warning signs.

TRANSMISSION

AI viruses are transmitted directly from bird to bird through airborne transmission or indirectly through contaminated material. The movement of humans, birds and equipment, along with exposure to migratory waterfowl, increases the risk for the introduction of AI.

DIAGNOSIS

Producers who suspect poultry to be infected with the AI virus, or observe clinical signs of HPAI, such as high morbidity and mortality, should immediately contact the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) or United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Inspection Service-Veterinary Services (USDA-APHIS-VS) for testing, if necessary. Upon laboratory confirmation of the disease, the TAHC will work closely with the bird owner to prevent disease spread. Response personnel will visit the operation and work to efficiently take samples, quarantine the premises and inventory poultry.

REPORTING AVIAN INFLUENZA

The TAHC should be notified of all suspected and confirmed cases of avian influenza within 24 hours of diagnosis. Reports can be made to any TAHC region office or to the TAHC headquarters at 1-800-550-8242.

FOWL REGISTRATION PROGRAM

In order to protect Texas poultry from avian influenza, the TAHC has established the Fowl Registration Program. This program requires a person who sells, distributes or transports live domestic fowl or exotic fowl to register with the TAHC. Through fowl registration, quick disease detection, efficient surveillance collection, and controlled spread of disease can be accomplished.

If you have any questions about fowl registration, or are interested in the program, please contact your TAHC region office, or visit https://www.tahc.texas.gov/news/brochures/TAHCBrochure_FowlRegistration.pdf.

PREVENTION

Poultry producers and dealers should follow sound biosecurity practices to prevent the introduction of AI into their flocks.

- Restrict traffic onto and off of property.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect all equipment, tires and undercarriages of vehicles before entering or leaving areas where poultry are present.
- Allow as few people to enter poultry premises as possible.
- Always wear clean clothing and disinfect properly before and after working with poultry.
- Protect poultry flocks from coming into contact with wild or migratory birds.
- Keep poultry away from any source of water that may have been contaminated by wild birds.
- Avoid visiting other poultry farms. If you must go where other poultry are located, disinfect or change clothing and shoes before returning to your farm.
- Do not bring birds to the farm unless you know the health status of the flock of origin.

HUMAN HEALTH CONCERNS

The AI virus does not normally infect humans. However, sporadic human infections with AI have occurred. Infection of humans typically results from unprotected, direct contact with infected birds.

For more information on human health concerns, visit: https://www.dshs.texas.gov/idcu/disease/avian_flu/.