

**AVIAN INFLUENZA INFORMATIONAL SHEET**

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is a highly infectious and rapidly fatal virus that has been detected in multiple US states starting in February 2022. It was first detected in birds on the East Coast, but the virus has been slowly spreading west in the weeks since then. The avian influenza virus has numerous strains, and the one involved in this current outbreak is a highly pathogenic form of H5N1, which has the potential for a significant impact on global agriculture and trade, as well as being fatal for individual birds.

Please see the website listed below for the most up-to-date information on which states have experienced outbreaks:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai>

**As of April 16, 2022, there have been no confirmed outbreaks of the virus within the state of California**. The Medical Center for Birds is closely monitoring this developing situation and is ready to implement emergency protocols in the event of an outbreak in order to protect our patients and their owners.

Out of caution and concern for the well-being of all our clients, patients, and staff, when making an appointment at MCFB for your bird, **please let us know if:**

1. You have had multiple birds die in a short period of time
2. You have ducks, geese, chickens, or turkeys showing compatible symptoms
3. Your birds have been directly exposed to migrating waterfowl.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. *Can I vaccinate my birds?*

No. There is no commercially available vaccine for avian influenza. Additionally, antibodies from vaccination can interfere with testing, so birds who are vaccinated may be at increased risk for being confiscated and euthanized if the disease is detected in this area. However, mandatory euthanasia is typically only enacted in poultry.

1. *Can my bird be treated for avian influenza if it gets sick?*

No. Unfortunately, HPAI is almost always fatal. It is also federally illegal to use antiviral medications in food animals such as chickens, regardless of whether the owner plans to consume eggs or meat from the chicken.

1. *What species of birds can get HPAI and how is it transmitted?*

Wild waterfowl and shorebirds are the primary reservoirs, meaning they can carry and spread the virus without getting ill, but most species of birds can get the infection. Ducks, geese, chickens, turkeys, pigeons, raptors, songbirds, and even parrots could potentially be affected by influenza. The virus is spread in the feces and respiratory secretions of infected birds and can be easily transmitted on objects contaminated with virus particles. HPAI is a tough virus and can survive cold and even freezing temperatures as well as aquatic environments.

1. *What precautions should I take?*

Make sure you are staying aware of the outbreak, and of how close the virus is geographically to you. If you have birds at home, the best thing you can do is prevent contact with other birds as much as possible. This means protecting your flock from exposure to wild birds in particular; this may involve covering their coop or run, or even bringing the birds inside during the day especially.

Additionally, even if you do not have birds at home, you may want to consider removing any bird feeders or bird baths, to prevent congregation of large groups of birds. This may help reduce or prevent further transmission of the virus.

1. *What are the clinical signs of influenza?*

Clinical signs of HPAI infection can vary widely. A sudden large mortality event (many birds in a flock dying all at once or in the span of 1-2 days) is very suspicious for HPAI. Birds may have neurologic dysfunction, be weak, dehydrated, unable to stand or feed themselves, or have breathing difficulty.

1. *What happens if HPAI is found in California?*

If HPAI is detected in wild or domestic birds in the state, MCFB will be on high alert to ensure we protect all of our patients and staff as with the Exotic Newcastle Disease outbreak a few short years ago. If you make an appointment for one of your birds, have had recent deaths in the flock, or symptoms that may be compatible, please let our team know both when you make the appointment when you arrive in our parking lot. A technician will first come out to your car wearing protective gear to make an initial assessment. Depending on the individual situation, we may then allow your pet in the building, or we may perform the exam with you and your bird still in the car.

If you have any birds pass away or be euthanized with symptoms that might be a result of HPAI, we strongly recommend that those bird(s) be submitted to the California Animal Health and Food Safety (CAHFS) lab at Davis for necropsy and influenza testing. This is extremely important to help track the spread of disease and ensure our local birds can stay healthy.