

Commonly Asked Questions from Backyard Flock Owners Related to **BIRD FLU (H5N1)**

What is bird flu (influenza H5N1)?

Bird flu is caused by the H5N1 subtype of Influenza A virus. Among migratory birds and poultry, this virus is highly contagious and can cause severe illness and death. Variants of this virus can cause infections in dairy cows and other animals, and can cause severe illness in cats. Rarely, it can infect humans.

Where can I find updated information about influenza H5N1 outbreaks?

Stay informed by regularly checking resources provided by your state agricultural department [[Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services](#)], the [United States Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA), and local veterinary authorities.

How does influenza H5N1 spread?

The virus spreads through direct contact with infected birds or other animals. It can also spread through contact with contaminated feed or water, poultry droppings, and equipment, clothing, and shoes contaminated with the virus. Human cases have been reported among persons with respiratory exposure to dust in chicken houses.

Can humans get infected from their poultry?

Human infections are very rare but can occur through close contact with infected birds or environments contaminated with the virus. Biosecurity and proper hygiene significantly reduce this risk.

What signs indicate my poultry might have influenza H5N1?

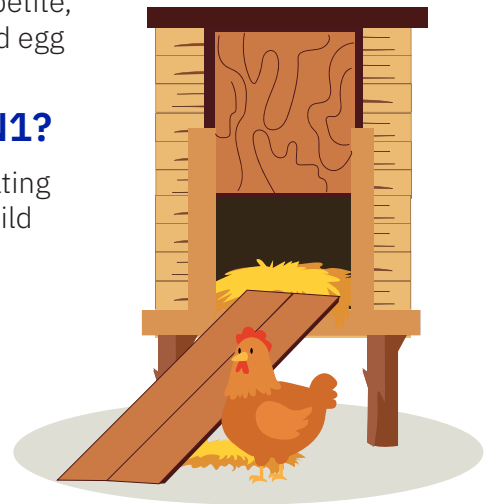
Look for symptoms such as sudden death, lack of energy, decreased appetite, swelling of the comb or wattles, respiratory distress, diarrhea, decreased egg production, and neurological signs.

How can I protect my chickens from influenza H5N1?

Implement strong biosecurity measures, including limiting visitors, isolating new birds, regularly disinfecting facilities, and preventing contact with wild or migratory birds.

How can I stop migratory birds from entering my farm safely and legally?

Use humane deterrents like visual scare devices (reflective tapes, scare balloons) and noise makers. Check local regulations before using these methods.



For more information

[piecenter.com](#) | [sccaahs.org](#)

Defend the Flock: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/> | <https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/caring/index.html>

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission: <https://myfwc.com/media/28604/fwc-hpai-rehabber-guidelines.pdf>

United States Department of Agriculture: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/eggs/shell-eggs-farm-table#>

Should I report sick birds and if so, how?

Yes, promptly report sick or deceased poultry to local agricultural or veterinary authorities to contain any potential spread of the virus. Most states have a direct telephone number that can be called to report dead poultry. To report unusual sickness or die-offs in domestic poultry in Florida contact FDACS at (850) 410-0900 (during office hours) or 1-800-342-5869 (after hours) or by email at RAD@FDACS.gov.

Report online here: <https://www.fdacs.gov/Consumer-Resources/Animals/Animal-Diseases/Reportable-Animal-Diseases/Report-Animal-Disease>

How should I handle eggs if I have sick or dead poultry?

Discard eggs from infected or potentially exposed birds safely and hygienically. Consult your local agriculture department for specific disposal guidelines.

Visit <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock> for precautionary measures.

Bird handlers should take the following precautionary measures:

- When working indoors, work in well-ventilated areas and do not bring birds inside the house.
- When working outdoors, work upwind of birds to decrease risk of inhaling aerosols such as dust, feathers or dander.
- When possible, wear rubber or latex gloves that are disposable or can be disinfected.
- When possible, wear protective eye wear or a face shield with a well-fitting facemask or N-95 respirator while handling birds.
- Wear boots or shoes that can be disinfected after use.
- Wear coveralls or other protective outerwear. Wash all clothing and outerwear worn after use, dry using high heat, and shower before changing into clean clothing.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Disinfect work surfaces and equipment.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke while handling birds.

What should I do if my birds test positive for influenza H5N1?

Follow instructions provided by agricultural and veterinary officials, which typically include quarantine, humane euthanasia of infected birds, thorough cleaning, disinfection, monitoring and/or a fallow period.

I have a backyard flock and want to sell eggs. What do I need to do to sell them?

To sell poultry or eggs to the public, a producer must be permitted by FDACS:

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Business-Services/Food/Food-Establishments/Limited-Poultry-and-Egg-Farms>.

Food safety questions should be addressed by the Food and Drug Administration:

<https://www.fda.gov/food/guidance-documents-regulatory-information-topic-food-and-dietary-supplements/egg-guidance-regulation-and-other-information>

