



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Ashwin Vasani, MD, PhD
Commissioner

2022 Veterinary Advisory # 2: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A H5N1 Detected in New York State

- Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) A H5N1 has been detected in non-commercial backyard poultry flocks and wild birds in multiple New York State counties outside of New York City.
- HPAI is a highly contagious disease among certain bird species which can cause severe morbidity and mortality, particularly among poultry. HPAI viruses rarely infect humans, and the risk posed by the current clade is considered low.
- Report suspicions of HPAI in poultry birds to the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYS AGM) at (518) 457-3502, and in wild birds to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) at (518) 478-2203.

Please share with your colleagues in Veterinary Medicine and your staff

April 12, 2022

Dear Veterinary Colleagues,

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the presence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) A H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b in captive and wild birds from multiple counties in New York State. Affected species include commercial, captive and back yard poultry, pheasants, guinea hen and snow geese. For a summary of current reports of HPAI detected in poultry and wild birds in the U.S. and New York State, visit the [USDA APHIS 2022 Detections of HPAI](#) and the [NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets](#).

HPAI viruses are highly contagious among certain bird species and can cause severe disease with high mortality, especially among poultry. Wild aquatic birds (e.g., waterfowl and shore birds such as ducks, geese, swans, terns and gulls) are natural hosts for HPAI virus and when infected can shed the virus asymptotically. While raptors are susceptible to infection, songbirds and passerine species are not believed to be highly susceptible to infection. HPAI viruses, including H5N1, have rarely infected humans and other animals; however, the current 2.3.4.4b HPAI H5N1 clade may be even less transmissible to humans than prior clades. To date, only one human infection has been detected globally, from an asymptomatic flock owner in the United Kingdom. No human cases of HPAI have ever been reported in the U.S. HPAI does not present an immediate public health concern at this time. The risk to the public is low, though people who work with wild birds and poultry may be at greater risk if they have close and prolonged, unprotected contact with HPAI infected birds.

Transmission and signs of illness

H5N1 virus can be shed in the saliva, nasal secretions, and feces of infected birds. H5N1 virus can quickly spread to poultry by direct contact with wild birds or a contaminated environment. People can spread H5N1 virus to birds through contaminated clothing and equipment.

Signs of H5N1 in poultry birds can include:

- Sudden increase in deaths without clinical signs
- Lack of energy and appetite
- Decrease in egg production and egg quality
- Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, comb, and legs
- Respiratory symptoms (i.e., sneezing, coughing, runny nose, and difficulty breathing)
- Neurological symptoms, such as falling or inability to walk
- Diarrhea

How to report sick or dead birds

Surveillance is the best way to detect the presence of H5N1 virus in NYC. Veterinarians should report suspicions of H5N1 affected poultry birds to the New York State Department of Agriculture and Market at **(518) 457-3502**. Suspicion of H5N1 in wild birds should be reported to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation at **(518) 478-2203**. Testing of suspect birds may be indicated and arranged by New York State. If H5N1 is confirmed, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will conduct health monitoring for people who have been exposed and facilitate testing if they become ill.

Deceased birds not submitted for testing should be double-bagged and placed in the trash. Contaminated surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected. Wash your hands well with soap and water after handling sick or dead birds. Veterinarians should advise their clients with backyard flocks to educate themselves on protecting their birds by visiting [USDA APHIS Defend the Flock](#) and the [Cornell Cooperative Extension Resources for Backyard Flocks](#).

Additional Resources

[CDC: Bird Flu Current Situation Summary](#)
[The Center for Food Security and Public Health: Avian Influenza](#)

As always, we greatly appreciate your partnership and cooperation.

Sincerely,

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