

What *Employers* Should Know About Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

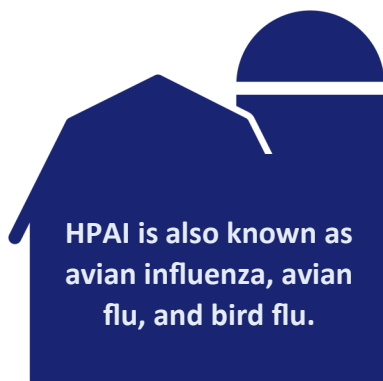


Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza spreads mainly among domesticated and wild birds. It can also spread to other animals.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is a disease caused by avian influenza Type A virus.

The virus spreads through the saliva, mucous, and feces of infected birds and other infected animals.

Animal products, such as eggs, unpasteurized milk, and uncooked meat might also spread the virus.



HPAI is also known as avian influenza, avian flu, and bird flu.

The risk of humans getting avian flu is low, but infections have happened among highly exposed individuals.

People who work or live around infected domestic poultry, cows, and other livestock are at risk of exposure to avian flu. So are people who might have direct contact with wild birds or animals, like hunters and bird enthusiasts. Unprotected contact with infected animals or animal products increases the risk of human avian flu infection. If the virus gets in the eyes, nose or mouth, or is inhaled via dust or droplets, humans may get sick. Contact with contaminated surfaces can also spread avian flu to humans. If cows or other livestock are infected, they can spread it to humans via their secretions and droppings.

If human illness from avian flu is rare, why is it important that I protect against it?

- Past outbreaks of avian influenza caused severe illness and death in some people, particularly poultry workers and others who were highly exposed to the virus without protection.
- It is possible that the virus can mutate and increase its ability to spread from bird to human and from human to human more often and more quickly.



Know the possible signs and symptoms of human avian flu infection.

The early signs and symptoms of avian flu are similar to those of seasonal flu. People who are sick may have any of the symptoms below. Laboratory testing is required to diagnose someone with avian flu. Your local health department can provide resources to help set up testing.



Fever

(Temperature of 100°F [37.8°C])



Sore throat



Runny or stuffy nose



Eye irritation or pink eye
(very common symptom)



Body aches



Fatigue



Shortness of breath



Headaches

How can you protect your workers against avian influenza?



Provide employees with personal protective equipment (PPE) and teach them how to use it. Ensure employees use PPE when in direct contact with potentially infected animals or animal products. PPE includes:



Properly-fitted unvented or indirectly vented safety goggles.



Boots or boot covers.



Properly fitted NIOSH-approved respirators, like an



Disposable gloves.



Disposable fluid-resistant coveralls and hair/head covers.



Direct employees to put on and remove PPE in a clean area, separate from sick animals or animal products.



Ensure reusable PPE (rubber boots and rubber aprons) are cleaned and disinfected by EPA-approved disinfectants with a label with claims against Influenza A viruses.



Instruct workers to avoid unprotected direct contact with sick animals, carcasses, feces or litter, unpasteurized (raw) milk, and water that may be contaminated with sick animal excretions or secretions.

It is important to take precautionary actions against the virus while working with animals and animal products, even if an outbreak has not yet been detected nearby.

- Be alert for sick or dying animals. This can be a sign of HPAI. Call your veterinarian or DATCP if you think there may be HPAI in your flock or livestock.
- Have a site-specific biosecurity plan that contains rules and procedures to help keep employees and animals healthy.
- Do not drink unpasteurized (raw) milk. Use caution with all uncooked or untreated animal products.

What happens if there is an outbreak of avian flu among animals in the workplace?



The Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) will contact the health department.



The health department contacts the employer to get contact information for workers exposed to HPAI to begin self-monitoring (or to set up employer-based reporting).



DATCP will work with the employer to manage infected animals and animal products.



If a worker has symptoms, the employer should direct them to contact the health department as soon as possible.



If no symptoms develop, the worker ends self-monitoring 10 days after their last exposure.

Who is responsible for monitoring employees for avian flu?

The local health department will coordinate monitoring of employees for avian flu after contacting the employer.

The employer should provide the following for all individuals exposed to infected animals or animal products:

- Name, phone number, and address
- Contractor names and contact information, or the contact information for their contracting company

How will the information provided to the public health department be used?

Under state law (Chapter 252), the local public health department has the authority to take measures necessary to control communicable diseases in their jurisdiction, including contacting individuals who have been exposed to avian flu. Names, addresses, and contact information of employees obtained by public health are considered **protected health information**. It will never be used for regulatory action against a business or employee. **Symptoms or test results reported as a part of self-monitoring will be confidential and only shared as needed to prevent the spread of the disease.**

Flip for more info!

Self-monitoring helps prevent the spread of HPAI.

What is self-monitoring?

Self-monitoring is checking yourself for signs and symptoms of an illness and reporting your observations to the public health department.

Who should self-monitor?

Anyone who worked on or near the affected premises in direct contact with animals or animal products from **3 days prior to the first animal illness until all animals are well or have been removed**. Ideally exposed individuals will report directly to the health department. However, if necessary one person on site can be the health department contact and just report the total number of people with symptoms each day.

Why is self-monitoring important?

Self-monitoring helps prevent the spread of bird flu between humans, even though it is rare. It enables public health officials to connect you to testing, medical care, and other resources to help you and prevent further spread of the disease and minimize disruption to business.

What should someone do when self-monitoring?

Self-monitoring should be done **once per day**. Individuals working at the infected site should **self-monitor daily until 10 days after their last exposure**. To self-monitor:

- Check for fever daily.
- Be alert for pink eye and flu-like symptoms.
- Provide daily updates about symptoms to the public health department.

What happens if someone gets sick?

If an employee gets sick during the monitoring period:

- The employee or employer should call the local health department right away to set up avian influenza testing and next steps.
- Strongly encourage your employees to stay away from work and avoid contact with others until the test results are back.
- If employees continue to work during this time, take these steps to reduce risks to your farm and workforce:
 - Have them wear a well-fitting respirator.
 - Assign them to tasks with minimal human and animal contact until test results are back.

For more information visit:

www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/influenza/avian.htm

datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/AvianInfluenza.aspx

www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/prevention/worker-protection-ppe.html

www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/occupational-health/farm-health.htm

