

## **HEALTH ALERT**

February 13, 2025

### **Ohio Reports First Human Case of Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)**

The Ohio Department of Health reports the state's first probable human case of influenza A(H5), also known as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), or bird flu. The infected individual is a farm worker who was in contact with deceased commercial poultry.

Nationally, there have been 68 confirmed human cases of HPAI in 11 states since the beginning of 2024. This includes one confirmed death in Louisiana. All but three of these cases involved exposures related to commercial agriculture and related operations or wild birds. In Ohio, one dairy herd and numerous poultry flocks have reported infections of bird flu since the outbreak began in 2022. There are no known cases of human-to-human transmission at this time.

According to the CDC, the current public health risk for HPAI is low. However, anyone with close and prolonged, unprotected contact with infected birds is at greater risk of illness.

Sick or dead wild birds can be reported to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources at **1-800-WILDLIFE** and sick or dead poultry can be reported to the Ohio Department of Agriculture at **614-728-6220**.

The chart on the following page shows exposure sources by state for the 68 confirmed human HPAI cases since 2024. There were also seven probable cases who tested positive for A(H5) at a public health laboratory, but CDC testing was not able to confirm A(H5) infection.

States with probable cases with commercial poultry exposure include Washington (3 cases) and Arizona (2 cases). California reported one probable case with commercial dairy (cattle) exposure. The state of Delaware had one probable case with an unknown exposure source.

## Exposure Source

State	Exposure Associated with Commercial Agriculture and Related Operations			Exposure Source Unknown <sup>†</sup>	State Total
	Dairy Herds (Cattle)	Poultry Farms and Culling Operations	Other Animal Exposure <sup>†</sup>		
California	36	0	0	2	38
Colorado	1	9	0	0	10
Iowa	0	1	0	0	1
Louisiana	0	0	1	0	1
Michigan	2	0	0	0	2
Missouri	0	0	0	1	1
Nevada	1	0	0	0	1
Oregon	0	1	0	0	1
Texas	1	0	0	0	1
Washington	0	11	0	0	11
Wisconsin	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Source Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>68</b>

<https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/situation-summary/index.html>

### **Avian Influenza (H5 Bird Flu)**

Avian Influenza is a very contagious viral illness of domestic and wild birds that is caused by type A influenza viruses. Illness can vary in severity depending on the strain and species affected. HPAI strains are extremely deadly to domestic poultry and can wipe out entire flocks in just a few days.

### **How Is HPAI Different from Other Animal Diseases?**

HPAI is extremely fast spreading and deadly in poultry flocks. The only way to stop the illness in poultry is to depopulate all affected and exposed birds.

### **Signs of HPAI In Poultry**

- Sudden death without any prior symptoms of illness
- Lethargy and loss of appetite
- A drop in egg production and/or soft-shelled, misshapen eggs
- Swelling of the eyelids, comb, wattles, and shanks
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, comb, and legs
- Difficulty breathing/gasping for air
- Nasal discharge, coughing, and sneezing
- Twisting of the head and neck (torticollis)
- Stumbling or falling
- Diarrhea

NOTE: It is possible for dairy herds to show signs of HPAI infection, such as reduced milk production, thicker and more concentrated milk, a decrease in feeding, abnormal tacky or loose feces, lethargy, dehydration, and fever. However, most dairy cows recover from the illness.

### **How Does HPAI Spread?**

Avian influenza viruses spread primarily through direct, bird-to-bird contact. However, illness may also spread via contaminated surfaces or materials (e.g., manure, egg flats, crates, farming materials/equipment, people's clothing/shoes/hands).

Regional HPAI transmission is due to multiple factors such as movement of livestock or normal business practices like numerous people, vehicles, and other farm equipment moving from an infected premises to other premises.

NOTE: Epidemiological data analysis does not currently indicate HPAI is spread onto dairy or poultry farms by migratory waterfowl.

## How To Prevent HPAI

The most effective way to prevent HPAI is to avoid handling sick birds or other animals. Biosecurity is also an important factor in protecting against HPAI. Biosecurity refers to everything that is done to keep livestock/property/people free of disease/illness.

Examples of biosecurity include:

1. Prevent contact with wild birds and waterfowl by keeping birds indoors when possible and implementing wildlife management practices.  
[https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/hpaifactsheet\\_wildlife-biosecurity.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/hpaifactsheet_wildlife-biosecurity.pdf)
2. Keep visitors to a minimum, only allowing those who care for poultry to have contact with them and make sure they follow proper biosecurity principles.
3. Wash hands with soap and water before and after coming in contact with livestock/poultry.
4. Provide disposable boot covers (preferred), disinfectant footbaths, or both for anyone having contact with the livestock/flock.
5. Change clothes before entering poultry areas and before exiting the premises.
6. Properly clean and disinfect tools/equipment before moving them to a new facility.

## What To Do If HPAI Is Suspected

1. Report unusual signs of illness or unexpected deaths immediately to the Ohio Poultry Association at **614-882-6111** or the Ohio Department of Agriculture at **614-728-6220** (for after hours at 888-456-3405).
2. Contact your veterinarian and have them evaluate the animal/flock/herd.

## What To Do If HPAI Exposure Is Suspected

1. Monitor for any new respiratory illness symptoms, including conjunctivitis (pink eye), for 10 days after exposure. Those who have worn recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) should be included in monitoring. If symptoms develop, seek medical evaluation immediately for possible influenza testing. The medical facility should be notified ahead of time regarding the potential exposure to HPAI.



## State Veterinarian Contacts

### State Veterinarian for Ohio

Dr. Dennis Summers

Phone: 614-728-6220

Email: [dennis.summers@agri.ohio.gov](mailto:dennis.summers@agri.ohio.gov)

### APHIS Area Veterinarian for Ohio

Dr. Jamie Davis

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For questions regarding HPAI or more information, please contact the Delaware Public Health District's Disease Control and Response Unit at 740-368-1700 or email [DCRU@delawarehealth.org](mailto:DCRU@delawarehealth.org).

### Sources

<https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/situation-summary/index.html>

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza>

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-livestock>

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2024/m1218-h5n1-flu.html>