



AVIAN BIRD FLU —STAY INFORMED—

■ Fast Facts About Avian Flu ■

Current Information as of July 21, 2006

Q&A For Poultry Producers

Avian influenza is an infection caused by avian (bird) influenza (flu) viruses, which occur naturally among birds. Wild birds worldwide, acting as reservoirs, carry a normally harmless form of influenza viruses in their intestines, and wild birds usually do not get sick from them. Unlike most avian influenza viruses, however, a new strain of H5N1 has caused mortality in more than 80 species of wild birds. Avian influenza can be very contagious among domestic poultry, and can make some domesticated birds, including chickens, ducks, and turkeys, very sick and kill them.

Avian influenza (AI) has not yet been found in any birds in North or South America. Even so, necessary precautions should be taken to lessen the chance that contact with potentially infected birds in the future would pose an animal or human health risk.

What types of birds are affected?

Bird species, both domestic and wild, can be affected by avian influenza. Waterfowl and shore birds frequently act as reservoirs and may carry the disease without showing signs of illness. Poultry are very susceptible to the disease and can die in large numbers.

How is the disease transmitted?

Avian influenza is typically spread from animal to animal by direct contact with feces or aerosol contact with respiratory secretions. The virus can live for a long time in the environment. It is easily spread by objects that have been contaminated with the virus, such as shoes, equipment, vehicles, etc.

How can I be sure that my birds are infected with avian influenza and not another poultry disease?

That's a real good question to be asking yourself, because the symptoms of avian flu can be similar to those of other diseases. To know if a bird has been infected with avian flu or a different disease, the surest way is to have it tested at an approved diagnostic laboratory. One source for individual tests is the diagnostic lab at Kansas State University (785-532-5650). Tests for avian influenza will range from \$4 to \$25 per case, depending on what you want done.

Unless there is a die-off of several birds, small-flock owners should consult their local practitioner, as an alternative to sending them for testing at a diagnostic lab.

Can't I just report a dead bird to the Kansas Animal Health Department and have them check it out?

Probably not. The Kansas Animal Health Department has established a threshold of 5 birds or 20-percent of the flock before they will investigate a suspected case of avian influenza. "Investigating" for the disease means that they will come out and do the testing for you, for free. That department is monitoring the spread of avian flu by keeping track of current national efforts, which includes testing in arctic regions along migratory patterns. Thus, officials likely will have a good sense of when avian flu will be in our region, if it does indeed reach this area.

Fast Facts About Avian Flu ■

Current Information as of July 21, 2006

Poultry Producers/Page 2

What do infected birds look like?

Sick birds will appear depressed with ruffled feathers and off feed. Coughing and sneezing may be noted. Birds may have watery diarrhea that starts out bright green and later progresses to white. In poultry, egg production will stop abruptly. The comb and wattles are often swollen and turn blue. Swelling may also occur around the eyes. Some birds may show nervous symptoms. Death often occurs within 24-48 hours of the time symptoms are first observed.

How can disease transmission be prevented?

First off, apply biosecurity measures to prevent your birds from becoming exposed to infected birds or waterfowl. Assuming the disease will eventually reach the United States, house flocks in bird-proof enclosures with solid roofs that will not allow feces to drop down into the pen. Rodent and insect control measures should be enforced to help prevent spread by these vectors.

How do I protect myself from exposure?

To date, all human cases have occurred in individuals with close or direct contact with infected poultry or wild birds. If the disease is suspected in your birds, contact your veterinarian or public health officials immediately.

How do I handle suspected problem birds?

Be sure to put on protective gloves, rubber or disposable plastic boots, high-quality face mask, safety glasses and coveralls before handling them. Place birds in a plastic container that can be closed securely. Avoid touching your eyes until hands have been washed with soap and water. Discard all disposable items and disinfect all clothing and equipment before leaving the site. The virus is susceptible to soap and disinfectants.

What do I do if I get sick?

Contact your physician immediately.

For current information and updates:

Scott Beyer, Poultry Specialist
K-State Research and Extension
Department of Animal Science and Industry
785-532-1201; sbeyer@oznet.ksu.edu

Larry Hollis, Extension Veterinarian
K-State Research and Extension
Department of Animal Science and Industry
785-532-1246; lhollis@oznet.ksu.edu

Find more information and answers on these Web sites:

K-State Research and Extension: www.avianflu.ksu.edu

U.S. Government: www.pandemicflu.gov

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service: www.fsis.usda.gov

*“Knowledge
for Life”*