

Avian Influenza (AI) - What to expect if your animals are infected

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About avian influenza

Avian influenza (AI) is a viral disease of birds. There are many different strains of the AI virus, and most of these have little or no effect on bird health. However, two types – known as H5 and H7 – can cause severe illness and death in affected flocks. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) initiates disease response actions when birds are suspected to be infected with highly pathogenic AI and low pathogenicity AI subtypes H5 and H7.

AI viruses can be classified into two broad categories: low pathogenicity AI and highly pathogenic AI, based on the severity of the illness caused in chickens. Highly pathogenic AI causes the greatest number of deaths in birds.

In Canada, highly pathogenic AI and low pathogenicity AI – subtypes H5 and H7 are federally reportable diseases and are referred to as notifiable avian influenza (NAI).

This means that producers, veterinarians and laboratories must notify the CFIA of all suspected or confirmed cases. Birds affected by NAI can show a variety of symptoms, including:

- high mortality and sudden death
- decreased food consumption

- huddling, depression, closed eyes
- respiratory signs (coughing and sneezing)
- decreased egg production
- watery greenish diarrhea
- excessive thirst
- swollen wattles and combs

Humans are rarely affected by AI, except in a limited number of cases when individuals were in close contact with infected birds. Nevertheless, public health authorities will take precautionary measures as warranted.

NAI disease control

The CFIA takes immediate disease control actions in response to all situations where domestic birds are suspected of being infected with NAI. While all disease response situations are different, the steps involved in an NAI response normally include the following:

- movement restrictions, for example, quarantines
- sample submission
- investigation
- destruction and disposal
- cleaning and disinfection
- compensation

Quarantine

If you are a producer of a flock of birds that is suspected of being infected with NAI, CFIA staff members will come to your farm to begin an investigation.

At that stage, a quarantine (also referred to as a Declaration of Infected Place) will be placed on your farm to control the potential spread of disease. You will be provided with documentation outlining the rules of the quarantine. Signs indicating that the property is a disease control area may also be provided. These signs must be posted at all entrances.

Under the quarantine, no birds, bird products (such as eggs) or bird by-products (such as manure) will be allowed to enter or leave your property without CFIA permission.

It is your responsibility to ensure people entering and exiting your property follow strict biosecurity measures, such as the cleaning and disinfection of footwear and vehicle tires. Other items being moved off the property will also need to be cleaned and disinfected under the direction of CFIA personnel.

While your property is under quarantine, you will have the following responsibilities:

- Request CFIA permission to move birds, bird products, bird by-products and poultry related equipment on or off the property.
- Ensure that footwear and vehicles leaving the property have been cleaned and disinfected.
- Apply strict biosecurity measures for yourself and any employees.
- Maintain fences and gates around the farm to control the movement of people on and off the premises.
- Where applicable, maintain fences and gates to areas housing birds – all birds should be housed indoors while the quarantine is in place.
- Report all sick and dying birds, and any that escape the farm.

- Implement vermin, feral animal, or wildlife control measures if warranted.
- Keep dogs, cats and other household pets confined.
- Inform all persons entering the farm of the quarantine.
- Limit on-farm visitors to essential services.

Investigation

The CFIA veterinarian will start the investigation by asking a series of questions about the health of your birds and the management practices you use. They will also attempt to answer any questions you may have.

To help CFIA staff in their investigation, you may be asked to provide the following information:

- flock records (for example, mortality, production, feed and water intake)
- veterinary records and laboratory reports
- a detailed description of farm management practices
- records of purchase/sale of feed, poultry, etc.
- movement on and off the premises during the past 21 days, (for example, feed trucks, power, gas)
- farm visitor logbooks
- a site map of the farm
- contact information for the farm veterinarian

Any premises considered to be in significant contact with your farm will also be quarantined because of the potential for disease spread. An example of a significant contact farm would be if you shared farm equipment or recently exchanged birds with another bird owner.

Your cooperation and that of any other parties involved is critical to the success of the investigation.

Confirmation of NAI

Testing to confirm if your birds are infected will be done as quickly as possible. Samples will be taken from the flock and sent to a CFIA-approved laboratory. Testing to confirm the 'H' type can be completed within one or two days.

If NAI is confirmed, all birds on your property will be humanely destroyed. Poultry products, such as eggs, will be destroyed as they are considered to pose a risk of spreading the AI virus to other birds.

Flocks on other farms in the surrounding area will also be quarantined and tested. If the particular virus present on your commercial farm is determined to be highly pathogenic, under special conditions, all the poultry on commercial operations within one kilometre of your commercial farm may also be pre-emptively destroyed.

If NAI is confirmed, local health authorities will be available to answer any human health concerns or questions that you may have.

Destruction and disposal

All birds are humanely destroyed using internationally recognized methods. Carcasses are disposed of in accordance with provincial requirements. Common disposal methods include burial, composting or incineration. All destruction and disposal costs may be covered by the CFIA.

Compensation

Under the *Health of Animals Act*, the CFIA may compensate owners for animals and things ordered destroyed during disease response situations. Compensation awards are based on market value, up to the maximum amounts established by the regulations.

For more details on the compensation process, please see the brochure [Animal Health Compensation: What to expect when an animal is ordered destroyed](#).

Cleaning and disinfection

Farms on which infected birds lived must be cleaned and disinfected after all destruction and disposal activities have been completed. The CFIA conducts a site assessment with the owner to determine which areas require cleaning and disinfection. The cleaning and disinfection process includes:

- removing litter and manure
- wet cleaning and disinfecting hard surfaces and structures
- cleaning and disinfecting tools and equipment

Cleaning and disinfecting costs are your responsibility.

Removal of quarantine

Once cleaning and disinfection are complete on the premises, the CFIA evaluates the farm to determine when the quarantine may be removed. Normally, this occurs at a minimum of 14 days after the cleaning and disinfection final inspection and approval.

Following removal of the quarantine, you can introduce new birds to the farm in accordance with CFIA requirements.

Confidentiality

As directed by the *Privacy Act* and other federal statutes, the CFIA is required to protect private information collected. Any information provided by you during a disease response situation is treated as confidential, unless otherwise indicated.

More information about AI

For [more information on Canada's approach to controlling and eradicating AI](#), visit inspection.canada.ca

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Date modified:

2022-04-23