

June 8, 2015

Current Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Situation

Twenty states - Michigan becomes the 21st state - to have positive HPAI cases in captive wild birds, wild birds, backyard flocks or commercial flocks, affecting almost 50 million domestic birds. Michigan also becomes the 6th state to detect HPAI in wild, free-ranging birds. There are currently no known cases of HPAI in domestic flocks in Michigan. On June 6, 2015, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) confirmed cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza, subtype H5N2, in three free-ranging goslings from Sterling Heights in Macomb County. MDARD is closely monitoring the situation and is prepared to respond quickly and efficiently as possible in the event of an outbreak in domestic poultry operations.

The following is a list of frequently asked questions for HPAI:

What is avian influenza?

- Avian influenza is a virus infecting wild birds and waterfowl as well as domestic poultry, such as chickens, turkeys, quail, and geese.
- Wild birds commonly have avian influenza and sometimes spread it to domestic birds through direct or indirect transmission.
- Ducks are considered carriers.
- Geese can get the disease, but do not generally pass it on.

What types of wildlife can be infected with AI and how do they get it?

- AI viruses have been found in many bird species, but are most often found in migratory waterfowl (ducks, geese, and swans). Other wild birds known to be capable of harboring influenza viruses including shorebirds, gulls, quail, and pheasants. The virus is shed in fecal droppings, saliva, and nasal discharges.

What is highly pathogenic avian influenza?

- Avian influenza viruses are classified as either high or low pathogenicity based on how sick the virus makes chickens. HPAI viruses are extremely contagious and cause high death loss in poultry flocks.

What are the signs of a sick domestic bird?

- Sick birds may experience...

- Sudden death
 - Neurologic signs
 - Abnormal behavior like difficulty walking
 - Lack of appetite, energy or vocalization
 - Significant drop in egg production
 - Swollen comb, wattles, legs or head
 - Nasal discharge, sneezing or coughing
 - Diarrhea
- With this particular type of HPAI there may be an absence of many of the routine “signs of illness.” Sudden death and high death losses are a major indicator of HPAI.

How is HPAI spread?

- HPAI is spread through droppings or nasal discharge of an infected bird, which contaminates dust and soil.
- People can carry the virus on their shoes, clothes, equipment and vehicles.

Does it affect people?

- No human infections have been detected at this time. The CDC considers the risk to people from these HPAI viruses to be low.
- Avian influenza is not a food safety concern and no birds infected with HPAI will enter the food chain.
- As a reminder, all poultry and eggs should be handled properly, such as washing your hands, and cooked to an internal temperature of 165° F.

What is being done to prevent and stop the spread of HPAI?

- MDARD has been working with veterinarians, Michigan State University Extension, poultry farmers and backyard livestock owners to provide information about increasing biosecurity as well as what to look for in their birds.
- Its imperative farmers and producers follow strict biosecurity practices to protect their flocks. Domestic poultry raised outdoors have a much greater risk of being exposed to diseases like avian influenza because they are more likely to interact with wild birds/poultry which could carry the disease.

- MDARD canceled all 2015 poultry and waterfowl exhibitions in Michigan to prevent the comingling of birds from different locations and prevent the spread of HPAI.
- DNR has taken immediate steps, outlined later in this document, to address the disease in free-ranging goose populations.

What steps can I take to protect my flock?

- If you have backyard poultry, you should increase your biosecurity practices including limiting the exposure to wild birds and restricting outdoor access to your flock.
- Following strict biosecurity practices helps Michigan's poultry farmers and owners to protect the health of their flock and other Michigan poultry farmers.
- Some biosecurity practices include, but aren't limited to:
 - Disinfecting when going in between coops; washing hands is important
 - Not sharing equipment with other farmers or in between coops
 - Washing and disinfecting equipment between uses
 - Disinfecting boots and other gear when moving in between coops
 - Using well water or municipal water as drinking water for birds; poultry should not be allowed to drink surface water because it potentially could be contaminated with AI
 - Keeping poultry feed secure so that there is no contact between feed/feed ingredients and wild birds or rodents
 - Prevent contact between wild birds and domestic birds

Who should I contact if I think birds are sick?

- If you think you have a sick bird, contact your local veterinarian.
- If your flock is experiencing severe illness or multiple death losses, contact MDARD at 800-292-3939 or for after-hours emergencies call 517-373-0440.
- Michigan residents who notice the death loss of three or more wild birds should report it to DNR at 517-336-5030.

Where were the geese located that have been diagnosed with AI?

- The three goslings that were picked up for disease testing were located in the City of Sterling Heights in Macomb County near the Lakeside Mall.

What has the DNR been doing to monitor for AI? In 2006, DNR created a [Michigan Surveillance and Response Plan](#) for HPAI in free-ranging wildlife. This plan will guide DNR management of wildlife populations.

In addition, the DNR has been conducting three types of surveillance:

- Examination of carcasses from mortality events affecting wild bird
- Sampling of live-caught wild birds
- Sampling of hunter-harvested wild birds

Now that H5N2 has been confirmed, what will the DNR do now?

- Guided by its response plan, the DNR will take immediate action with the goals of mitigating the spread of AI in wildlife populations and preventing the transmission of the disease to domestic poultry operations. The DNR will:
 - Create an AI Core Area, which is a 10-mile radius around the index cases. Any geese that are rounded-up in this core area will be euthanized and a random sample will be tested for AI. Carcasses will be landfilled.
 - Create an AI Management Zone. Any counties that touch the AI Core Area will be considered within the AI Management Zone. The management zone will consist of Macomb and Oakland counties.
 - Change goose relocation activities. The DNR permits the relocation of nuisance geese in Southeast Michigan and elsewhere to other parts of the state. The June 2015 positive AI finding came just as those relocation activities were scheduled to begin. The AI management zone will be under quarantine and round-up and relocation within these counties will not be allowed except for the purpose of further testing.
 - Continue round up and relocation in the remainder of state.
 - Change goose relocation drop-off sites so none are within a 10-mile radius of a large commercial poultry facility in Michigan.
 - Undertake heightened AI surveillance in the two-county AI Management Zone.
 - Increase biosecurity measures for contractors who relocate geese and anybody handling geese, as well as for waterfowl banders.
 - Continue statewide AI surveillance, which includes responding to suspicious dead animals, testing some geese that are being relocated, banding duck and geese and testing hunter-harvested waterfowl.

I am a waterfowl and/or goose hunter, what does this mean for me?

- The hunting seasons will continue as usual. Waterfowl and goose hunters will be encouraged to follow biosecurity protocols when hunting, such as:
 - Washing and disinfecting hands when leaving the hunting site
 - Washing and disinfecting hunting equipment between uses
 - Disinfecting boots and other hunting wear
 - Cook waterfowl to 165 degrees internal temperature

Will this impact the Michigan's goose populations?

- We don't anticipate any serious impacts to the Michigan's goose population. The state's resident Canada goose population is large and healthy. The goose population immediately near the site with the positive test results could see a decline, but there should not be impacts to the statewide population.