



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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For Veterinarians: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and Cats FAQs

- **What is highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)?**
HPAI is a highly contagious virus that primarily affects wild and domestic birds. The virus has also been detected in various species of wild and domestic mammals—such as red foxes, racoons, opossums, dairy cattle, and cats.
- **How do cats catch HPAI?**
In general, the risk posed by HPAI to the domestic cat population is low. Exposure to infected animals (wild or domestic), infected animal products (like raw milk), or contaminated objects (such as clothing, shoes, or equipment) are modes of infection for cats. However, further investigations are being done to better understand all the potential avenues of transmission.
- **Have any cats in Michigan been diagnosed with HPAI?**
Both feral and domestic cats have tested positive for the disease. However, most cats diagnosed with HPAI are owned by individuals who work on affected premises or farms.
- **What are the signs of HPAI in cats?**
Signs include decreased energy and appetite progressing to neurologic signs (lack of coordination, inability to stand, tremors, and seizures). Respiratory signs (nasal discharge, coughing, or sneezing) may or may not be present. Also, sometimes cats can die from the virus without exhibiting any signs of illness.
- **Can cats give HPAI to humans?**
While HPAI is a zoonotic disease, cats are not known to be significant epidemiological vectors of HPAI to humans or other animals. However, precautions should be taken when handling any animal suspected of having HPAI.
- **What precautions should be taken for suspected cases of HPAI in cats?**
Use your clinic's isolation and patient handling protocols for suspected infectious and/or zoonotic disease cases. Please also view the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's webpage: [Considerations for Veterinarians: Evaluating and Handling of Cats Potentially Exposed to HPAI A\(H5N1\) Virus](#).
- **What diagnostic testing options are available for cats?**
Contact the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) at 800-292-3939 to discuss possible testing options.
- **What else is being done to track and study the virus in cats?**
The U.S. Department of Agriculture is covering the testing costs of sick and dead cats and wildlife near H5N1-positive premises. Cats with neurologic signs that

are directly or indirectly connected to dairy or H5N1-positive poultry facilities are also eligible.

- **Is HPAI in cats reportable?**

Yes. MDARD has made HPAI [reportable](#) in all species. If the virus is **suspected in any domestic animal**, contact MDARD at 800-292-3939 (daytime) or 517-373-0440 (after-hours).