

# Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) & Cats FAQ

## 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.

## 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 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.

## 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).

## What if I suspect my cat has HPAI?

Please contact your veterinarian to determine the next appropriate steps to take for the care of your animal.

## Can cats give HPAI to humans?

While HPAI can affect both animals and people, cats are not known to be a significant avenue of infection for humans or other animals.

## 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 ways cats can be exposed to the virus. However, further investigations are being done to better understand how the virus can be transmitted.

## What are the signs of HPAI in cats?

Signs include decreased energy and appetite, which progress 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.

## How can cats best be protected from HPAI?

- Limit contact between your animals and other animals of unknown health status.
- Avoid contact with wildlife, especially sick or dead wildlife.
- Change your clothes and shoes after interacting with any animals of unknown health status before caring for your own personal animals.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after interacting with any animal outside of your household.
- Do not allow your animals to drink unpasteurized milk.
- Always monitor the health of your animal(s) and contact your veterinarian if there are ever any animal-health related concerns.

## Where can I go to learn more about HPAI in Michigan?

Please visit [michigan.gov/birdflu](https://michigan.gov/birdflu) to see the latest information on HPAI in the state. Also, sign up for the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's "[Avian Influenza](#)" [listserve](#) to receive updates.

