The University of Georgia

College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
Cooperative Extension

Poultry Housing Tips

Avian Influenza Update and FAQ

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With the recent detection of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (AI) in commercial turkey flocks in several states, this newsletter is being provided to answer questions regarding this disease. Since December 2014 there have been reports of Avian Influenza in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California, Minnesota, Missouri, Arkansas and most recently Kansas. The virus was first detected in wildlife and backyard flocks. Thus far it has been diagnosed in turkey flocks in CA, MN, MO, and AR. This disease is easily passed among birds but it does not easily pass to humans. It is also important to remember that humans will not contract avian influenza through consumption of properly prepared poultry meat and eggs. The information below is provided for use when discussing the AI. It is important to emphasize that no AI has been detected in Georgia as of this date.

What is Avian Influenza (AI)?

AI is a highly contagious viral disease of birds. Its reservoir is wild birds, especially waterfowl. In many cases water fowl are simply carriers of the AI virus and they are not adversely affected. There are AI viruses of low pathogenicity (LPAI - causes mild disease), and other of high pathogenicity (HPAI - causes severe disease and death). Under the right circumstances, LPAI can mutate into HPAI. Avian influenza in any of its forms is bad news. It can make domesticated birds such as chickens and turkeys very sick and may cause high mortality.

Can humans contract Avian Influenza?

The risk of contracting avian influenza from birds is extremely low. AI viruses do not usually infect humans. Rare cases of avian influenza infection in humans have resulted from very close physical contact with infected live birds or surfaces contaminated with secretion/excretions from infected birds.

Can I contract Avian Influenza from eating poultry or eggs?

No. You cannot get avian influenza from poultry and eggs that have been properly cooked. Scientific evidence has clearly proven that the process of cooking poultry meat and eggs destroys the AI virus.

What can be done to prevent infection in my flock?

All commercial poultry flocks in Georgia are monitored for AI prior to being transported. If positive, they would not enter the food chain.

One of the most important things is to utilize good biosecurity on your property/farm.

1) Restrict access to your property/farm and flock.

2) Wash and clean clothes, shoes, equipment and hands routinely when working with your flocks.

3) Do not risk disease coming on your property/farm. Do not visit other poultry flocks. Do not share equipment between farms.

4) Do not allow wild waterfowl to have contact with your birds. Do not let wild waterfowl reside on nearby ponds. Do not water your poultry from open water sources. Do not come back to your flock after duck hunting without proper biosecurity precautions.

5) Know the symptoms of Avian Influenza.
   Sudden increase in bird mortality
   Nasal discharge
   Watery and/or green diarrhea
   Lack of energy
   Swelling around the eyes, neck and head
   Purple discoloration of wattles, combs and legs
   Paralysis in Turkeys
   Twisting of the head/neck down under the body in Turkeys

Report sick birds to the Georgia Poultry Lab

Gainesville Lab
3235 Abit Massey Way
Gainesville, GA 30507
Phone 770-766-6810

Forsyth Lab
PO Box 6025
222 Industrial Park Road
Forsyth, GA 31029
Phone 478-994-1219

Tifton Lab
3150 Highway 41 South
Tifton, GA 31794-8877
Phone: 970-420-4155

Additional Sources on Avian Influenza:

FAQs on Avian Influenza and "bird flu" for Georgians

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/birdbiosecurity/AI/

Posters and Brochures on Flock Biosecurity

http://eden.lsu.edu/topics/agdisasters/avianflu/Pages/default.aspx

Update on Avian Influenza Findings

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