Help Stop Avian Influenza from Spreading to your Poultry Farm

New Nouveau Brunswick CANADA

www.gnb.ca/AFA-APA

What is Avian Influenza?

Avian Influenza, commonly called "Bird Flu", is a highly contagious infectious viral disease of wild and domestic birds. Some strains of this virus can also affect people and animals, but the likelihood of humans contracting the disease in Canada is extremely low.

How does it spread?

The Avian Influenza virus is mainly shed in the droppings and secretions of infected birds. Susceptible birds that come in contact with the virus become infected and may develop disease.

Avian Influenza viruses commonly occur naturally in wild waterfowl and some other wild birds that may appear to be completely healthy. Migratory birds can carry the virus for long distances, likely even from other continents.

Large amounts of the virus can be present in bird droppings, which can contaminate dust, soil, water, equipment, vehicles, cages, clothing and footwear, and can be carried on these from farm to farm and from country to country. The virus can even be carried on the feet and bodies of animals such as rodents, and likely also by flies. Fact: One gram of infected poultry manure can contain enough Avian Influenza virus to infect up to 1 million birds.

Avian Influenza could also spread through international trade of infected live poultry or through smuggling of infected birds or poultry products.

Who is at risk?

Your birds may be at risk of Avian Influenza if exposed to other domestic or wild birds, especially waterfowl, or to unsanitized vehicles, clothing, footwear, equipment, water and feed, or to humans and other animals that have been in contact with wild or domestic birds or their droppings. The greatest risk is on farms that don't have good preventative (biosecurity) measures in place. Biosecurity is the suite of measures taken to keep birds healthy and prevent the spread of disease.

Signs of Avian Influenza

Infected birds may die rapidly without showing any other signs of disease. The death rate is sometimes 100% in outbreaks of Avian Influenza.

However, any combination of the following clinical signs may be observed:

- *Decreased feed consumption*
- *Drop in egg production*
- *Increased or decreased water consumption*
- *Heads, wattles and combs may become swollen and dark-coloured*
- *Coughing, sneezing, ruffled feathers, depression, diarrhea*
- *Red splotches (hemorrhages) on the non-feathered part of the legs*

The severity of disease can vary considerably with different strains of the virus.

Be on high alert.....

It is critical that you observe your birds carefully for signs of disease, and contact your veterinarian to investigate any spike in mortality, drop in production or disease problem.

Producers and veterinarians have a legal obligation, under the federal *Health of Animals Act*, to immediately notify the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) of any suspect cases of Avian Influenza. The legislation is in place to protect Canada's poultry industry, as well as to protect public health, bird health and international trade, so prompt reporting is crucial to help minimize the potential impact of disease.

A diagnosis of Avian Influenza can only be confirmed by laboratory testing.

Protecting you and your family

Although the chances of people getting sick from Avian Influenza are extremely low, people who work around poultry should take extra care to prevent catching the virus or other diseases from poultry, or from spreading human viruses and other diseases to poultry.

- *Wash your hands thoroughly, or preferably shower, and change into clean clothing and footwear before and after working around poultry.*
- *Always wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food for you or for poultry, and before eating, drinking, smoking or chewing gum.*
- *Stay home when you are sick, to prevent spreading any diseases to coworkers or to poultry.*
- *Get a flu vaccine each year to reduce your risk of getting a strain of human flu that you might pass on to other people or to birds.*

Strategies in Place

The CFIA imposes strict regulations on Canadian imports of poultry and poultry products from foreign countries.

The CFIA has developed an emergency response strategy for strains of Avian Influenza which are reportable nationally and internationally and can cause serious disease in poultry and/or humans. The CFIA and the New Brunswick government have jointly developed a plan to deal with foreign animal diseases such as Avian Influenza. New Brunswick's commercial poultry industry also has an emergency plan.

If Avian Influenza occurs in New Brunswick

In the event that a poultry farm has a suspected case of Avian Influenza, the CFIA would immediately investigate. If the diagnosis of Avian Influenza is confirmed, the following actions would likely be taken, especially if one of the viral strains of concern is involved:

- *Enforcement of immediate strict quarantine and movement control on all infected and exposed poultry farms*
- *Declaration of "control areas" to control all infected flocks*
- *Widespread testing of birds on farms within the control area and farms in contact with infected farms*
- *Humane destruction and disposal of all infected and exposed birds*
- *Cleaning and decontamination of infected premises*

Producer Compensation

If certain strains of the Avian Influenza virus are detected and the CFIA emergency plan is enacted, affected producers will receive some compensation for infected flocks that are ordered to be destroyed.

Summary

Health officials now believe it's not a question of IF but rather WHEN strains of Avian Influenza causing serious disease in birds will arrive in North America.

Protect New Brunswick's poultry industry by learning more about this disease.

Take a hard look at your farm's biosecurity practices. What can you do better?

Important website links:

- *Canadian Food Inspection Agency http://www.inspection.gc.ca*
- *World Organization for Animal Health http://www.oie.int/eng/en_index.htm*
- *World Health Organization http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/*