



## Barnstable County

Regional Government of Cape Cod  
3195 Main Street | Barnstable, Massachusetts 02630

Department of Health and Environment

### Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Q & A

2/16/2023

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus strains are extremely infectious, often fatal to farmed birds like chickens, and can spread rapidly from flock-to-flock.

Low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) virus strains occur naturally in wild migratory waterfowl and shorebirds without causing illness. LPAI can infect domestic poultry, creating little/no signs of illness.

This HPAI H5N1 is not primarily a public health concern at this time. This is mostly a problem for domestic poultry and especially industrial producers. However, because influenza viruses mutate, federal agencies are monitoring the virus. - Dr. Catherine M. Brown, MA DPH

People rarely get bird flu, and when they do, it is most often through direct contact with infected birds. Birds can be infected with bird flu without appearing sick. As a general precaution people should avoid direct contact with wild birds and people should definitely avoid contact with birds that appear ill or have died. - Dr. Joanna Pulit-Penalzoza, biologist CDC

#### 1. Who can a resident/visitor inform when they find a sick/injured wild bird on Cape Cod?

- **Cape Wildlife Center** - wildlife veterinary hospital that provides rehabilitative care to sick, injured, and orphaned wild animals

Call for immediate assistance & wildlife emergencies:

[\(508\) 362-0111](tel:5083620111)

Admissions Hours: 10:00 – 3:00 Daily

After-hours emergency line [\(617\) 835-6845](tel:6178356845)

[Cape Wildlife Center | Wildlife Hospital and Education Center](#)

<https://capewildlifecenter.com/>

4011 Main Street, Barnstable, MA 02630

- **Wild Care, Inc** - wildlife rehabilitation center that treats injured, ill and orphaned wildlife for release

Call if you find an animal in distress:

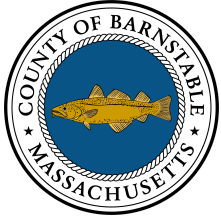
[\(508\) 240-2255](tel:5082402255)

Open daily from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

[Wildlife Helpline | Wild Care \(wildcarecapecod.org\)](#) or

<https://www.wildcarecapecod.org/animal-help-line/>

10 Smith Lane, Eastham, MA 02642



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#### **2. Who can a resident/visitor inform when they find a dead wild bird\*?**

- MassWildlife relies on public reporting to locate and track dead birds. Members of the public are encouraged to fill out an online form to submit a record.
- Report here: [observations of dead wild birds | Mass.gov](#) or <https://www.mass.gov/forms/report-observations-of-dead-wild-birds>
- An individual dead wild bird does not generally require testing or removal.

\*use this form to report an individual dead seabird (gull, tern, cormorant or sea duck) or 5+ dead wild birds or non-seabirds (any other species) at a single location over 1-2 days

#### **3. Does a resident/visitor need to call a wildlife agency or the town to share the location of the dead bird so it can be removed from the environment?**

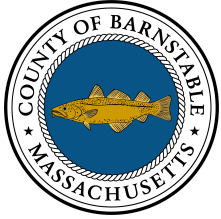
- Removal of dead seabirds from the environment is good practice to help reduce environmental contamination and potential exposure of other birds and mammals.
- No single entity is responsible for the removal, and it is dependent on the municipality and the landowner.
- Residents are encouraged to keep themselves and their pets away from dead animals.

#### **4. Do dead birds need to be collected and tested to add data to surveillance programs that count dead wild birds and test for avian influenza?**

- Testing and surveillance decisions are made by MassWildlife and USDA.
- To discuss if testing is warranted, especially when multiple dead birds are involved, municipalities should email MassWildlife [mass.wildlife@mass.gov](mailto:mass.wildlife@mass.gov) or call the USDA at [413-253-2403](tel:413-253-2403).
- Not all birds need to be tested and not all carcasses will be suitable for testing.
- Sick or freshly dead birds are the best samples.
- The circulating HPAI H5N1 virus is being carried in migratory birds so finding the virus is likely and not finding it does not mean it is absent.

#### **5. If a resident chooses to dispose of a dead bird or animal found on their property, how can they do it more safely?**

- Do not touch any dead bird, or any other wild animal, with bare hands.
- Wear a mask while using a shovel to scoop up the dead bird or animal and put it in a trash bag.
- Place that bag into a second bag and place it in the trash.



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- Wear gloves or place plastic bags over hands if hands must be used (if shovel or other tool is not available) to put the dead bird or animal in a trash bag.
- After disposing of the bird, wash hands with soap for 30 seconds.

#### **6. What general guidance can the public follow to avoid disease spread from birds or poultry meat?**

- Avoid touching surfaces contaminated with bird feces or secretions.
- Wash hands after handling birds or meat or after being in an environment with large amounts of bird feces, such as poultry houses.
- Follow safe food handling practices for all poultry products including eggs:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/chicken.html#:~:text=CDC%20is%20working%20with%20USDA%E2%80%99s%20Food%20Safety%20and,been%20shown%20to%20reduce%20Salmonella%20contamination%20of%20chicken>

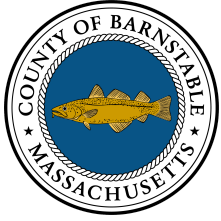
#### **7. Who can a town notify when it is made aware of multiple dead birds?**

In some cases of larger mortality events that are suspected to be caused by HPAI, a state agency may assist with collection and disposal.

- Email MassWildlife [mass.wildlife@mass.gov](mailto:mass.wildlife@mass.gov)
- Or call the USDA at [413-253-2403](tel:413-253-2403)

#### **8. Is there a standard process that town animal control officers/inspectors follow when they are called about a dead or injured wild bird? How do local animal control/inspectors receive updates about new concerns like avian influenza?**

- Local Animal Control Officers and Animal Inspectors are a valuable local resource.
- Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) provides guidance to them regarding effective mitigation and response efforts.
- It is impossible to remove carcasses of all dead birds, but the town may decide to dispose of carcasses in areas of high human activity. LBOH staff or the public can reach local animal control through regular local connections.



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### Department of Health and Environment Backyard Flocks

So far, more than 450 backyard flocks have been infected with HPAI. Only 21 backyard flocks were infected nationally in the 2015 outbreak. Wild birds often enter backyard chicken/hen enclosures at night to look for food. To protect your flock, it is recommended that the flock is fed indoors, and that netting is installed to prevent wild birds from entering the backyard enclosure.

#### **9. Do towns maintain a list of residents who have backyard chickens?**

- This falls under the purview of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR).
- Municipal Animal Inspectors have responsibility for maintaining *Barn Books* which contain information about animal ownership.

#### **10. How do backyard chicken owners receive important safety advisories and updates?**

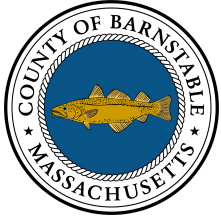
- LBOH should work with their Animal Inspectors to distribute information.
- See the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) website: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/avian-influenza>
- MDAR flier details how to protect your flock: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/biosecurity-for-your-backyard-flock-2022/download>

#### **11. What is important for backyard flock owners to know regarding the health of their flock?**

- Flock owners should know the warning signs of diseases in chickens such as avian influenza.
- Birds with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) produce more virus over time.
- Early detection helps prevent the spread of disease.

#### **12. What are signs of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and illness in my flock?**

- Increase in unexplained deaths in your flock, with or without symptoms
- Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing, and/or runny nose
- Decrease in water or feed consumption
- Watery, green diarrhea
- Lack of energy or unusually quiet
- Drop in egg production, or soft or thin-shelled, misshapen eggs
- Swelling around the eyes, neck, or head
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs



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#### 13. How do I report sick or dead poultry in my flock?

- **Don't wait - call immediately - do not move any birds on or off your premises.**
- **Call Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Animal Health Division 617-626-1795**
- **or submit online form: Poultry Disease Reporting Form | Mass.gov**
- **or <https://www.mass.gov/forms/poultry-disease-reporting-form>**

#### Document content vetted by:

MassWildlife (Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife)

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)

Dr. Catherine M. Brown, DVM MSc MPH

State Epidemiologist and State Public Health Veterinarian

Massachusetts Department of Public Health State Public Health Laboratory

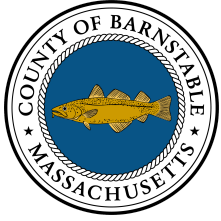
Andrew Vitz, Ph.D.

State Ornithologist

MassWildlife

#### 14. What are additional resources to learn more about highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)?

- **Wild Care, Inc**  
<https://www.wildcarecapecod.org/get-all-the-facts-about-bird-flu-on-cape-cod/>  
  
<https://www.wildcarecapecod.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Bird-Flu-Fact-Sheet-Wild-Care-2.pdf>
- **CDC**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/index.htm>  
  
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/spotlights/2022-2023/avian-flu-highly-pathogenic.htm>  
  
[https://tools.cdc.gov/podcasts/media/pdf/EID\\_09\\_22\\_InfluenzaAinFerret.pdf](https://tools.cdc.gov/podcasts/media/pdf/EID_09_22_InfluenzaAinFerret.pdf)



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- **USDA**

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avianinfluenza/ai#:~:text=Avian%20Influenza.%20LPAI%20can%20infect%20domestic%20poultry%2C%20creating,from%20becoming%20established%20in%20the%20U.S.%20poultry%20population>

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai>

- **Other**

<https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/pandemic-biohazard/ask-the-expert-highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza-ah5n1-viruses/>

Thank you to Stephanie Ellis, Executive Director, of Wild Care, Inc, and Zak Mertz, Executive Director, of Cape Wildlife Center, for sharing how their organizations and staff have augmented their services since January 2022 to safely provide wildlife care during the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza outbreak.

-Theresa Covell/theresa.covell@capecod.gov