



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

Karen Ross, Secretary

To All Backyard Poultry Owners,

We are seeing the continued spread of H5N1 Avian Influenza (aka HPAI or Bird Flu) in both dairy and poultry farms across multiple counties. We consider the winter bird migration season a period of high risk to all poultry owners. Avian Influenza is a highly contagious and often fatal disease in birds. The disease is spread through movement of infected or exposed birds, direct or indirect contact with infected wild and domestic birds or contact with the Bird Flu virus on fomites (surfaces) such as hands, shoes, clothing, or feet and fur of rodents and other animals. This virus is mainly spread by wild birds, especially in wild waterfowl such as ducks and geese. Any wild bird species can also become a source of infection.

The California State Veterinarian has placed a [ban](#) on poultry and dairy cattle exhibitions at fairs and shows until further notice. This decision was made to protect the remaining unaffected herds and flocks across California. This ban addresses the highest risk bird species related to Avian Influenza – chickens, turkeys, ducks, and upland game birds (e.g. pheasants and chukars). All other exhibitions and shows including those with psittacines, pigeons, and doves will not be impacted at this time. We're working tirelessly to combat Bird Flu and protect our state's farms and flocks. CDFA and USDA are working together to safeguard our agricultural resources and food supply. We hope our communities will support us in our efforts through supporting this ban and the recommendations we have provided in this letter.

Clinical signs of Bird Flu in poultry include sudden death, trouble breathing, clear runny discharge (from nose, mouth, and eyes), lethargy, decreased food and water intake, swelling (eyes, head, wattles, or combs), discolored or bruised comb, wattles, or legs, stumbling/falling or twisted neck. If your flock experiences any unusual/suspicious illness or deaths, call your veterinarian or the California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) **Sick Bird Hotline at 866-922-2473**.

Avoid touching or handling any injured, sick, or dead wild birds unless necessary. Do not let pets such as cats and dogs consume any wild birds. Sick and injured wild birds should be reported to your local animal control office. Report any unusual deaths (groups of 5 or more) in wild birds, or any deaths in endangered, threatened, and/or protected wild bird species to the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) at 916-358-2790 or online at bit.ly/CDFWreporting (year-round reporting). If a wild bird MUST be handled, wear appropriate personal protective equipment such as disposable mask and gloves and wash your hands with soap and water. If needing to dispose of a deceased bird, place into a leak proof plastic bag, seal, spray with a disinfectant known to kill the avian influenza virus, and place into a





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secondary plastic bag, seal, and spray disinfectant again. The bag may be placed into a receptacle (trash can) and prevent wild animals such as racoons and bears from retrieving the bag. If you are concerned that you or a loved one may have contracted the Bird Flu virus, contact your local public health department. If you suspect Bird Flu in your pet cat or dog, please also contact your veterinarian and your local public health department.

The current risk to the public remains low. Human infections with bird flu viruses are rare, but they can happen when the virus gets into a person's eyes, nose, mouth, or when inhaled. No person-to-person spread of bird flu has been detected and people rarely get Bird Flu, but those who interact with poultry, dairy cattle or wildlife have a greater risk of infection. Take precautions if you have a backyard flock. Keep birds separate from other animals (like pets and livestock). Avoid kissing or putting birds near your face. Wash your hands before and after contact with your birds. Avoid visiting places where other birds are kept. Do not touch sick or dead birds without personal protective equipment (PPE) such as eye goggles, face masks and gloves. Signs and symptoms of infection may include: eye redness or discharge, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, diarrhea, vomiting, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue, trouble breathing, fever (100 °F or higher). Contact your [local public health department](#) right away to arrange for testing and treatment and that you may have been exposed to bird flu.

We strongly urge all poultry owners in California to protect their flocks by increasing their biosecurity practices until risks are reduced. Recommended biosecurity practices can be found on the [CDFA](#) and [USDA](#) websites.

For the latest updates on H5N1 affecting poultry and livestock, please visit our webpage [here](#) and for national detections of H5N1, please visit the USDA APHIS webpage at this [link](#).

Sincerely,

Your CDFA Animal Health Team

