Avian Influenza

Avian Influenza (AI) is a contagious viral infection that can affect several species of food producing birds as well as pet birds and wild birds. While it primarily affects birds, it can also cause disease in other wild and farmed animals and rarely in humans.

Report suspicious cases to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the Nova Scotia Chief Veterinary Officer

In Canada, Avian Influenza is a reportable disease under the federal *Health of Animals Act and Regulations*. All suspected cases must be reported to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) through your nearest CFIA Animal Health Office. Avian Influenza is also a reportable disease under the Nova Scotia *Animal Health and Protection Act and Regulations* and must be reported to the NS Chief Veterinary Officer (NS-CVO)

CFIA Tel: 902-536-1010

NS-CVO Tel: (902) 893-6540

How is the disease spread?

Wild birds, especially waterfowl, are natural carriers of Avian Influen**za.** They may not be affected by the disease but they can transmit it to domestic animals. The disease can be spread by:

- direct contact with infected animals
- contaminated feed and water, equipment, clothing, footwear, and animal litter

Risk to flocks

In birds, Avian Influenza often causes severe disease, death, and production losses, and is not treatable. CFIA responds to cases of Avian Influenza in domestic birds. CFIA's response strategy would involve:

- Humane destruction and proper disposal of all infected and exposed birds
- Zoning to define infected and disease-free areas
- Strict quarantine and movement controls to prevent spread of the disease
- Surveillance and tracing of potentially infected animals
- Decontamination of infected premises

Control measures

Prevention is best achieved through strict biosecurity measures designed to protect your animals from Avian Influenza and other common diseases. Owners should take the following precautions:

- Prevent wild birds from coming in contact with animals, as well as with their food and water
- Maintain strict control over access to animal houses, limiting access to people who must be there
- Require that all people who enter the site where animals are held disinfect their footwear, wash their hands and wear clean clothing
- Make sure that equipment is cleaned and disinfected before taking it into animal houses
- Avoid having bird feeders and duck ponds close to barns because they attract wild birds
- Maintain high sanitation standards

Clinical signs of the disease in animals

Clinical signs of Avian Influenza are not specific and may be more severe in some types of groups of animals. Clinical signs include:

- Sudden death (often in high numbers for birds)
- Lack of energy, movement or appetite
- Decreased egg production (birds)
- Swelling and discoloration around the head, neck or eyes (birds)
- Nervous signs, tremors, or lack of coordination
- Coughing, gasping for air or sneezing
- Diarrhea
- Abnormal milk (dairy cattle)

Risk to humans

Avian influenza viruses, such as H5N1 may, on rare occasions, cause disease in humans. Transmission to humans has occurred through close contact with infected animals or heavily contaminated environments.

General biosecurity measures

Register with the Nova Scotia Premises ID program

This is a free program for all livestock and poultry owners. The program allows for traceability information to be accessed quickly for the protection of animal and public health. More information on this program can be found at https://novascotia.ca/agri/programs-and-services/industry-protection/#PID

Prevent contact with wild birds and other animals

Keep animals and their water and food away from wild birds

Take care with new stock

The most common source of disease is from new stock:

- Be aware that Avian Influenza (especially in waterfowl), and some other diseases can be present in apparently healthy animals with no history of disease.
- Obtain animals from reliable sources and, if possible, from a single source.

- For birds consider buying only fertilized eggs or commercially vaccinated chicks
- Choose disease-free sources. However, a flock or herd without a history of disease does not mean the flock is safe. The disease status of a flock or herd may be unknown
- Keep animals of the same age, if possible, or group animals by age

Quarantine new or returning animals

This helps prevent many diseases. Note that animals may not have clinical signs even through a quarantine period and may still be a risk.

- Quarantine new or returning animals for 2 to 4 weeks before mixing with your flock or herd
- Quarantine in a separate building to prevent direct contact
- Observe animals for abnormal behavior
- Handle and tend to quarantined animals last using separate clothing and equipment

Monitor animal health

Contact your veterinarian if you observe any of the following:

- Animals appear sick
- Mortality is high
- Production drops suddenly

Dead animals may be submitted to the Nova Scotia Animal Health Laboratory for post-mortem examinations.

Nova Scotia Animal Health Laboratory
Hancock Veterinary Building
(Dalhousie Agricultural Campus)
65 River Road, Bible Hill,
Nova Scotia B2N 2P3
Tel: (902) 893-6540
Email: AnimalHealthLab@novascotia.ca

Maintain housing and yard

- Clean and disinfect the animal area or pen at least once each year.
- Clean and sanitize feeders and drinkers regularly

Discourage pests and rodents

- Keep the area around pens free of debris
- Cut the grass short
- Drain standing water
- Keep feed in tightly closed containers
- Clean up spilled feed promptly

Maintain personal hygiene

- Use dedicated clothing and footwear for working around the animals
- Wash hands thoroughly before and after working with the animals

Manage risk through workflow

- Work with youngest animals first
- Handle sick or quarantined animals last

Restrict access to your flock

- Post bio-security signs
- Restrict visitors
- Ensure that necessary visitors or service personnel
  - wear clean footwear and coveralls
  - follow personal hygiene procedures including hand washing

Manage risk caused by equipment

- Do not share equipment with other animal owners
- Regularly clean and disinfect equipment that comes into contact with animals

Keep accurate records

- source of animals
- health concerns
- vaccination history
- changes (acquisition of new animals, new feed, etc.)

Follow a biosecurity plan

- Create a biosecurity plan
- Update your plan regularly

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