

### A Threat to U.S. Poultry

Worldwide, there are many strains of avian influenza (AI) virus that can cause varying amounts of clinical illness in poultry. AI viruses can infect chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, geese, and guinea fowl as well as a wide variety of other birds. Migratory waterfowl have proved to be a natural reservoir for the less-infectious strains of the disease.

AI viruses can be classified into low-pathogenicity (LPAI) and high-pathogenicity (HPAI) forms based on the severity of the illness they cause. Most AI virus strains are classified as LPAI and typically cause few or no clinical signs in infected birds. However, some LPAI virus strains are capable of mutating under field conditions into HPAI viruses.

HPAI is an extremely infectious and fatal form of the disease. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) works to keep HPAI from becoming established in the U.S. poultry population.

### Clinical Signs

Birds affected with HPAI may show one or more of the following signs:

- Sudden death without clinical signs
- Lack of energy and appetite
- Decreased egg production
- Soft-shelled or misshapen eggs
- Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs
- Nasal discharge
- Coughing, sneezing
- Incoordination
- Diarrhea

### Economic Impact of an HPAI Outbreak

A major outbreak of HPAI would be costly to the poultry industry, consumers, and taxpayers. Eradication of an HPAI outbreak that occurred during 1983 and 1984 in the Northeastern United States resulted in the destruction of more than 17 million birds at a cost of nearly \$65 million. This outbreak also caused retail egg prices to increase by more than 30 percent.



Birds affected by HPAI may show swelling of the head and face.



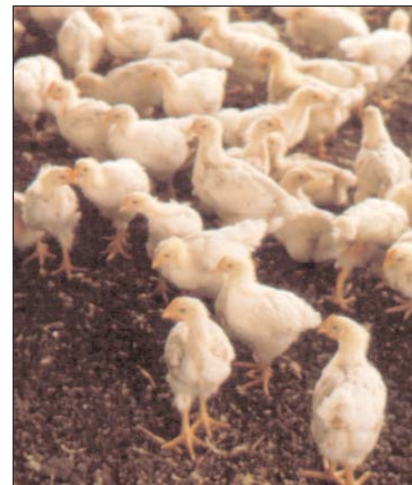
Hemorrhaging of the skin and legs is just one of the signs birds may exhibit when infected with the virus that causes HPAI.



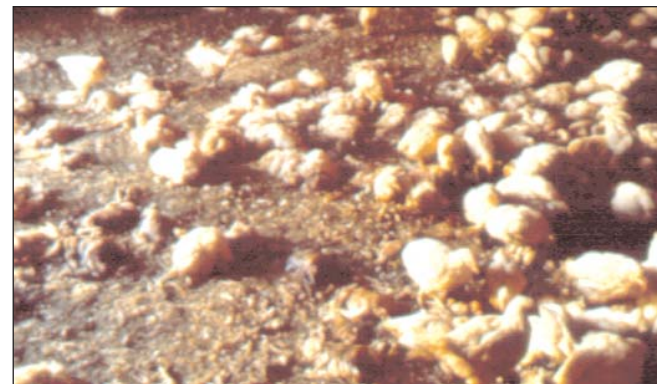
Purple discoloration of the comb may be an indicator of HPAI.

### Introduction and Spread of HPAI Virus

AI can be spread from bird to bird by direct contact. HPAI viruses can also be spread by manure, equipment, vehicles, egg flats, crates, and people whose clothing or shoes have come in contact with the virus. One gram of contaminated manure can contain enough virus to infect 1 million birds.



HPAI can devastate a healthy broiler flock, leaving high rates of mortality and economic losses.



Here, healthy turkeys are compared with turkeys exhibiting signs of diarrhea and depression due to HPAI.

### Biosecurity Measures on the Farm

Poultry producers should strengthen biosecurity practices to prevent the introduction of HPAI into their flocks. The following are some sound biosecurity practices:

- Keep an "all-in, all-out" philosophy of flock management.
- Protect poultry flocks from coming into contact with wild or migratory birds. Keep poultry away from any source of water that may have been contaminated by wild birds.
- Permit only essential workers and vehicles to enter the farm.
- Provide clean clothing and disinfection facilities for employees.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect equipment and vehicles (including tires and undercarriage) entering and leaving the farm.
- Do not loan equipment or vehicles to, or borrow them from, other farms.
- Avoid visiting other poultry farms. If you do visit another farm or live-bird market, change footwear and clothing before working with your own flock.
- Do not bring birds from slaughter channels, especially live-bird markets, back to the farm.



A biosecure broiler house protects poultry flocks from coming into contact with wild or migratory birds.

### Biosecurity Measures at Live-Bird Markets

To prevent a possible outbreak of HPAI, poultry producers and dealers must also use biosecurity precautions at live-bird markets. Live-bird markets operate in many major cities. Avian influenza viruses can be introduced into these markets if they receive infected birds or contaminated crates and trucks. Once the virus is established in the market, the movement of birds, crates, or trucks from a contaminated market can spread the virus to other farms and markets. Therefore, the following protective measures should be taken at live-bird markets to prevent the possible spread of disease:

- Use plastic instead of wooden crates for easier cleaning.
- Keep scales and floors clean of manure, feathers, and other debris.
- Clean and disinfect all equipment, crates, and vehicles before returning them to the farm.
- Keep incoming poultry separate from unsold birds, especially if birds are from different lots.
- Clean and disinfect the marketplace after every day of sale.
- Do not return unsold birds to the farm.

For more specific information about biosecurity and cleaning and disinfection practices, contact your local APHIS Veterinary Services office.

### Disease Surveillance Activities

USDA works with Federal, State, and industry leaders to monitor and respond to outbreaks of LPAI. APHIS has provided funding and support personnel to States when LPAI has been detected. When HPAI is detected, APHIS personnel are primary responders due to the infectivity of the disease and its high mortality rate among poultry. Close attention is also given to two subtypes of LPAI—the H5 and H7 strains—because of their potential to mutate into HPAI.

In addition to international import restrictions, APHIS and State veterinarians specially trained to diagnose foreign animal diseases regularly conduct field investigations of suspicious disease conditions. This surveillance is assisted by university personnel, State animal health officials, USDA-accredited veterinarians, and members of industry who report suspicious cases. APHIS and State animal health officials work cooperatively with the poultry industry to conduct surveillance at



Allowing a backyard flock to commingle with wild waterfowl poses the risk of introducing HPAI into U.S. poultry.



If HPAI were detected in U.S. poultry, measures such as quarantine, control, and cleanup would be implemented to prevent opportunities for the virus to spread.

breeding flocks, slaughter plants, live-bird markets, livestock auctions, and poultry dealers.

If HPAI were detected in U.S. poultry, APHIS veterinarians would work quickly with their State counterparts and the industry to implement measures such as quarantine, control, and cleanup to prevent opportunities for the virus to spread.

### Report Suspicious Signs

If birds exhibit clinical signs of HPAI or may have been exposed to birds with the disease, immediately notify Federal or State animal health officials.

For more information about HPAI or biosecurity practices, contact

USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services  
Emergency Management  
4700 River Road, Unit 41  
Riverdale, MD 20737-1231  
Telephone (301) 734-8073  
Fax (301) 734-7817

For public health information, contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA, at (404) 639-3311.

Current information on animal diseases and suspected outbreaks is also available on the Internet at <<http://www.aphis.usda.gov>>.

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