What veterinarians can do to protect Washington from avian influenza

FAST FACTS:

• The presence of a highly pathogenic avian influenza has been confirmed in wild birds in Whatcom County and domestic poultry in Benton County.

• An emergency rule is in place in Benton and Franklin counties establishing a quarantine zone and restricting movement of poultry and poultry products. Visit www.agr.wa.gov/lawsrules/rulemaking for the complete quarantine rule and a detailed map.

• Although avian influenza is a highly contagious disease to domestic poultry, there are no apparent risks to human health from domestic poultry or domestic poultry products.

• It is safe to eat poultry products, including meat and eggs.

• Help reduce the risk of disease spread by:
  o Following strict biosecurity measures when going on and off poultry premises;
  o Stay on the farm if you suspect highly pathogenic avian influenza on a farm and call WSDA immediately; and
  o Educate your clients on the current risks of highly pathogenic avian influenza in Washington.

January 12, 2015
Background:
In December, highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was confirmed on farms in British Columbia, Canada. HPAI was detected in wild birds in Whatcom County as a result of heightened surveillance following the Canadian outbreak in British Columbia. Two separate virus strains were identified: H5N2 in a northern pintail duck and H5N8 in a captive gyrfalcon that was fed wild waterfowl.

HPAI H5N2 has since been identified in two flocks in Benton County. Both flocks have been humanely euthanized. A quarantine order is currently in place in parts of Benton and Franklin counties to restrict the movement of poultry and poultry products by order of WSDA.

State and federal agencies are conducting outreach in the immediate area within Benton and Franklin counties aimed at backyard bird owners. Owners are encouraged to practice good biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of spreading the disease by preventing contact between their birds and wild waterfowl.

About Avian Influenza:
Avian influenza is a highly contagious viral disease of chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, geese, guinea fowl, and many wild birds. It can often be carried in wild waterfowl without symptoms. Direct contact with infected birds, contaminated objects/equipment, and aerosol (short distances) can spread the virus which is found in feces, saliva, and respiratory secretions.

The many different strains of the avian influenza virus are broadly categorized into low pathogenic (LPAI) and highly pathogenic (HPAI), based on how severely ill the virus makes chickens. HPAI causes the greatest number of deaths in domesticated poultry.

Poultry affected by avian influenza can show many symptoms, including:
- Decreased food consumption, huddling, depression, closed eyes.
- Respiratory signs, such as coughing and sneezing.
- Decreased egg production, watery greenish diarrhea, excessive thirst.
- Swollen wattles and combs.
- High mortality and sudden death.

The avian influenza strains currently detected in Washington cause no apparent human health concerns. No one in the U.S. has become ill from an infected bird. Avian influenza has been found in other parts of the world, where there have been some cases of human illness from coming in contact with infected birds. It is safe to eat properly prepared poultry products, including meat and eggs.

What should veterinarians do to help protect Washington poultry flocks?
- Limit, monitor, and record your movement and the movement of vehicles onto farms.
- If contact with sick birds is necessary, wear protective clothing (disposable gloves, mask, coveralls, and boots).
- Wash and disinfect items going on and off farms, such as footwear, vehicles and equipment.
- Isolate any ill animals and contact WSDA.
- Educate your clients about HPAI risks – including biosecurity measures, contact with wild bird fowl, risks of hunting, and food safety.

Who can I contact?
- If you see sickness in birds, please contact WSDA Avian Health Program at 1-800-606-3056.
- If you are concerned because you or your family member becomes sick, please contact Washington State Department of Health at 1-800-525-0127.

More Information:
- International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) – HPAI and Food Safety - [www.who.int/foodsafety/fs_management/No_02_AvianInfluenza_Dec04_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/foodsafety/fs_management/No_02_AvianInfluenza_Dec04_en.pdf)
- FDA – What Consumers Need to Know About Avian Influenza - [www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/](http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/)

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