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**From: Dr. Keith Lehman**  
Chief Provincial Veterinarian

**To: Alberta Backyard/Small-Flock Poultry Keepers**

**Re: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)**

**Summary:**

- **Confirmed HPAI-positive premises in Alberta domestic flocks to date:**
  - **Spring 2022: 31**
  - **Summer 2022: 4**
  - **Fall 2022: 25**
  - **Winter 2023: 0**
- Of these 60 infected premises, just under half were small flocks.
- **A surge in cases is expected to occur again this spring as large numbers of migratory birds carrying the virus make their way back to/through Alberta**
- Domestic turkeys and chickens appear to be most susceptible to this virus.
- The wild bird migratory season was a significant risk factor with most flock infections occurring in the spring and fall.
- Events where poultry and poultry keepers from different locations commingle, such as swaps/sales, auctions, fairs, or shows, always carry a risk of transmission of poultry diseases. Avoiding these during high risk HPAI periods is recommended.
- The HPAI virus is passed primarily in feces and can survive in the environment for extended periods in the right conditions (cold and/or wet). A high viral load in the environment near your flock poses a significant risk.
- Many species of wild birds have been affected including snow geese, Canada geese, owls, hawks, ravens, magpies, cormorants, and grebes. Note that some may carry the virus while showing no signs.
- Some wild mammals have also been affected including, skunks, coyotes, and foxes.
- Given the large numbers of mortalities in some wild bird species last year, sampling will likely be targeted at larger die-offs. These can be reported toll-free at 310-0000 and asking to **speak with a wildlife specialist** or by visiting the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative website at <http://www.cwhc-rcsf.ca/>. More information on HPAI in wild birds is available at <https://www.alberta.ca/avian-influenza-in-wild-birds.aspx>.

## **Good biosecurity and increased vigilance are still your best defense against HPAI.**

### **Take a pro-active approach to protecting your flock:**

- Think of ways to manage your flock should HPAI cases surge during the coming spring migration.
- Be mindful of the fact that HPAI virus may have over-wintered in your surrounding environment and may be present even before migratory birds arrive.
- Report signs of illness and sudden deaths in your flock to your flock veterinarian and/or the Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian (OCPV).

### **Focus on biosecurity to prevent infection:**

- Limit the visitors you choose to allow near your flock.
- Avoid visiting other premises that keep poultry, including poultry shows/sales.
- Have a separate isolation coop at least 30 feet from your main coop. Use this to move any sick birds to for observation, and/or to house and monitor new additions or returning birds (after shows) for a minimum of 30 days before introducing them to your flock.
- Have dedicated footwear (and ideally, clothing) for accessing your coop. Do not wear these outside your coop/run and keep them separate from your other footwear.
- Reduce the chances of direct contact between your flock and wild birds (or wild bird feces) by not allowing your birds to free-range.
- Predator-proof your coop/run and have pest-control strategies in place to prevent wild birds and mammals from bringing HPAI into your flock.
- Wash/sanitize hands before and after attending to any poultry.

### **Participate in Small Flock Poultry Disease Surveillance:**

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (AGI) has an ongoing **Non-Quota, Non-Commercial Disease Investigation Poultry Program** to help small-flock poultry owners and their veterinarians (for flocks with symptoms that meet specific criteria). Please [click on this link](#) for more information about this program.
- Register for a **Premises Identification (PID) number** (if you don't already have one) and keep your information up to date to receive notifications on disease outbreaks near you. This link will take you to more information about the PID program: <https://www.alberta.ca/register-with-the-animal-premises-identification-program.aspx>.

**What should you do if you suspect your flock may have HPAI?  
Contact either your flock veterinarian,  
the Canadian Food Inspection Agency at 403-338-5225, or  
The Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian at 780-427-3448 or 1-800-524-0051**

For further information on avian influenza in Canada and the latest updates (including control zones near you), you can visit the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website at [www.inspection.gc.ca/avian-influenza](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/avian-influenza) and/or the Government of Alberta website at <https://www.alberta.ca/avian-influenza-reportable.aspx>.

If you have questions regarding this notice, please feel free to contact the Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian by email at [chief.prov.vet@gov.ab.ca](mailto:chief.prov.vet@gov.ab.ca) or by telephone at 780-427-3448 or toll-free at 310-FARM (3276).