

Advisory Notice Regarding Avian Influenza in the Atlantic Provinces

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has recently detected Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (also known as “bird flu”), subtype H5N1, in wild birds and backyard flocks in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, as well as in a commercial poultry facility in Nova Scotia. On March 8, 2022 a case of avian influenza (H5N1) was confirmed in a wild bird in New Brunswick.

Avian influenza is a highly contagious viral disease that affects a variety of bird species, including chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, pet birds, and wild birds. There are several different avian influenza strains, ranging from those causing mild or no clinical signs (low pathogenicity), to those causing severe clinical signs and high mortality rates in poultry (highly pathogenic). Wild birds, particularly waterfowl, are the natural reservoirs for all strains of avian influenza viruses and play an important role in the maintenance and spread. As such, all efforts should be taken to minimize exposure of your flocks to wild birds. As a general precaution, people should not handle wild birds, dead or alive. Should you discover a sick or dead wild bird, please contact the Department of Natural Resources and Energy Development at 1-833-301-0334.

Due to the highly contagious nature and severity of disease caused by Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza viruses, infection can result in major economic losses to the provincial and federal poultry industries. As such, this is a reportable disease under Canada’s *Health of Animals Act*. It is also noted that there is a slight risk of spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza to humans and other mammalian species, so care should be taken around birds suspected to have this virus.

Currently, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza has not been detected in any New Brunswick commercial poultry facility or backyard flock in the province. Due to the recent identification of the highly pathogenic virus in the province, the Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture, and Fisheries is urging those raising poultry or other birds to remain vigilant against the disease by heightening biosecurity practices, minimizing flock exposure to wild birds, and monitoring your birds for signs of avian influenza such as loss of energy/appetite, decreased egg production, swelling around the head and eyes, coughing or gasping for air, lack of coordination, and sudden death.

Concerns about sick and dead commercial poultry facility or backyard flock should be immediately reported to the Provincial Veterinary Service Regional Office in your area.

Provincial veterinary offices are located at:

Bathurst – 506-547-2089

Fredericton – 506-453-2210

Grand Falls – 506-473-7755

Moncton – 506-856-2277

Sussex – 506-432-2001

Wicklow-506-392-5101

The websites below provide more detailed information

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/10/pdf/Agriculture/avian.pdf>

<https://inspection.canada.ca/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/avian-influenza/eng/1323990856863/1323991018946>

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