



*This information is a professional communication for small flock poultry producers and owners. The OAHN group is a dedicated group of veterinarians from primary care practices, academia, government and laboratories, who meet regularly to discuss disease and health issues in poultry health. It is the intent of this program to monitor and protect the health of poultry in Ontario.*

## AVIAN INFLUENZA

### **What is Avian Influenza? What are the implications for Canada?**

Avian influenza is a viral infection that can infect domestic and wild birds. **Recent outbreaks have been detected in both commercial and small flocks in Canada and in the United States.** The virus is easily transmitted from bird to bird, no matter the species. Wild birds, however, can carry the virus without appearing sick. Consuming poultry meat or eggs is safe, provided proper cooking methods are followed. The risk to Canadian flocks if avian influenza enters either a commercial or small flock is severe as the avian influenza virus causes high levels of mortality (death), financial and personal loss for all owners affected, as well as trade implications. Avian influenza can live in the environment for extended periods of time. Unfortunately, there is no vaccination that is protective against the virus, so prevention through biosecurity is the most important action for all flock owners, regardless of species or flock size.

### **What does this mean for me as a small flock owner?**

It is important to do everything we can in Ontario to prevent the entrance of the disease to our flocks. Preventing the disease on your farm, recognizing the signs and knowing what to do in the event of an emergency is the best course of action.

**How do I recognize it?** Birds sick with avian influenza can exhibit lack of appetite and energy, drop in egg production, difficulty walking, swollen head, combs, wattles or legs; nasal discharge, sneezing, coughing; bloody diarrhea, or sudden death. Large numbers of birds may become ill very rapidly.

**What should I do if I notice these clinical signs?** Contact your veterinarian immediately. If you are a registered grower with one of the four supply managed marketing boards, contact your board also to be connected with additional resources.

### **How can I prevent Avian Influenza in my flock?**

- Ensure you have a veterinarian for your flock. This allows you access to valuable resources, diagnostics and rapid help if an issue arises. If you currently do not have a flock veterinarian, speak to a veterinarian in your area about becoming your flock veterinarian as soon as possible.
- Call your veterinarian first if birds are showing signs of illness. Do not move sick/dead birds off the farm, even to bring to the laboratory or veterinarian without speaking to your veterinarian.
- Ensure wild birds do not have access to your domesticated birds (water sources, ponds, common areas and feed/water). Remember, wild birds often do not show clinical signs of avian influenza but can be shedding the virus.
- Wash your hands, and change clothes (including footwear) before interacting with other flocks, and insist that visitors to your farm do the same
- During times of high alert, do not come into contact with other flocks or individual birds. Avoid bird shows or bird swaps. To find out if you are in an outbreak area, visit <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/> or <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/ai/eng/1323990856863/1323991018946>
- Limit visitors to your farm. Keep a visitor log book of people coming onto your farm or property. Contact Poultry Industry Council for a free log book and small flock kit.

### **Where can I find more information?**

- Canadian Food Inspection Agency Avian Influenza site (updates about recent outbreaks, movement restrictions etc): <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/ai/eng/1323990856863/1323991018946>
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency (poultry disease basics): <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/bird-health-basics/eng/1323643634523/1323644740109>
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs small flock information: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/poultry/smallflock.html>
- Poultry Industry Council (free small flock kits): <http://www.poultryindustryCouncil.ca/>
- Poultry Health Research Network avian influenza information: <https://www.uoguelph.ca/phrn/content/bird-flu-what-we-should-know>
- CDFA resources (fact sheets, prevention tips, disinfecting etc): [http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/animal\\_health/avian\\_influenza.html](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/animal_health/avian_influenza.html)  
Scroll down to access free downloads and information  
Chicken Farmers of Ontario small flock site (disease alert information): [www.smallflock.ca](http://www.smallflock.ca)

### **Important poultry contact information:**

Agency	When to contact	Number
CFIA emergency line	For veterinarians to report suspect foreign animal disease	1-877-814-2342
OMAFRA Agricultural Information Contact Centre	General information	1-877-424-1300
Chicken Farmers of Ontario Hotline (24/7 coverage for reporting health concerns)	Small flock chicken growers and commercial chicken flock growers	1-877-SOS-BYRD
Poultry Industry Council	Small flock kits, including visitor log books	1-519-837-0284

