

Avian Influenza

Where to Get Help

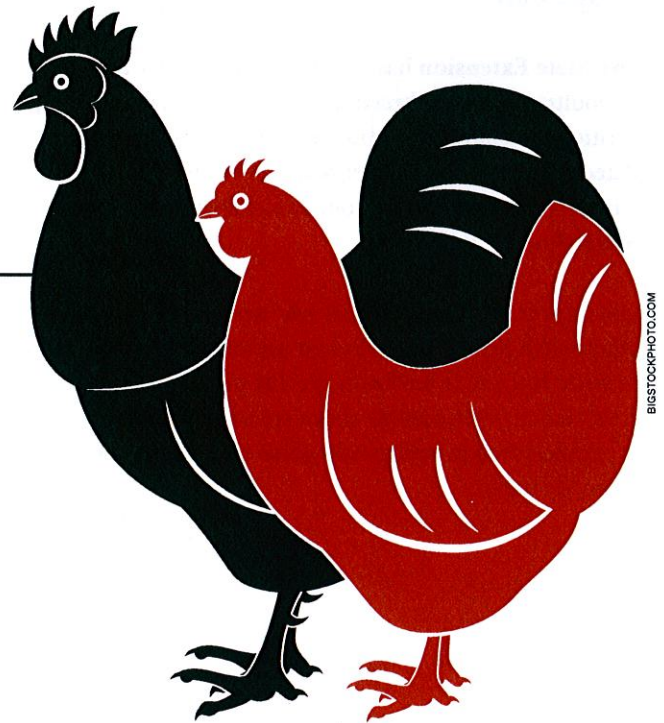
Where do I get help when I suspect a health problem in my poultry flock?

The Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Laboratory System has several university-based veterinarians with advanced training and expertise in poultry diseases. They deal with all types of avian health problems, from the common to the unusual, and can help sort out individual bird problems from those that may cause sickness in the entire flock. Diseases that may spread to other animals and people can also be identified. Conditions that may impact food safety of poultry meat and eggs can be detected or ruled out. Please contact either of the labs below for consultation, preferably the one nearer your location:

Penn State Animal Diagnostic Laboratory
University Park, PA (Centre County)
Phone: 814-863-0837
vbs.psu.edu/adl

New Bolton Center Laboratory of Avian Medicine and Pathology, University of Pennsylvania
Kennett Square, PA (Chester County)
Phone: 610-444-5800 ext. 6710
www.vet.upenn.edu/research/academic-departments/pathobiology/avian-medicine-and-pathology

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Services also has veterinarians on staff in the roles of keeping birds healthy and preventing disease spread. Some are based at the main offices in Harrisburg, and there are staff in each of seven regions in the state. You may know the PDA veterinarian in your region from fairs or certified poultry technician training courses. Contact phone information for these offices are as follows:



State Veterinarian, Harrisburg
717-772-2852
extension.psu.edu/flock-help

Regional PDA Veterinarians

1. Northwest (Meadville): 814-332-6890
2. North Central (Montoursville): 570-433-2640 ext. 2
3. Northeast (Tunkhannock): 570-836-2181
4. Southwest (Greensburg) 724-832-1073
5. Central (Martinsburg): 814-793-1849 ext.218
6. South Central (Harrisburg): 717-836-3237
7. Southeast (Collegeville): 610-489-1003

The United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a national toll-free hotline to report significant illness or deaths consistent with avian influenza and exotic Newcastle disease, both highly contagious viral diseases. These signs can include sudden death without clinical signs; lack of energy or appetite; decreased egg production; soft-shelled or misshapen eggs; swelling or purple discoloration of head, eyelids, comb, hocks; nasal discharge; coughing; sneezing; incoordination;

and diarrhea. If applicable to your situation, call the **USDA Healthy Birds Hotline at 866-536-7593**. Callers will be routed to a state or federal veterinarian in Pennsylvania for a case assessment.

Penn State Extension has experts in many other areas of keeping poultry, including breeding, incubation, genetics, judging, nutrition, housing, ventilation, etc. Many health problems are related to these factors rather than infectious disease agents alone. For contact information, go to extension.psu.edu/animals/poultry/directory.

Private-practice veterinarians who are known to work with poultry patients may also be contacted, especially with reference to a single bird with specific problems. The university-based veterinarians above are available as a resource for private-practice vets to help guide sample selection and diagnostic tests.

What else should I do when I suspect a health problem in my poultry flock?

If birds are dying, the dead should be double-bagged and refrigerated for possible testing. Meanwhile, until the problem is investigated further, diagnosed, and/or resolved, put your flock on "voluntary quarantine." This means operating as a closed flock during this time. Do not buy, sell, trade, or otherwise move birds to or from your premises. Do not visit other flocks, poultry auctions, or shows, or receive visitors who have their own birds. These measures will help prevent potential disease-causing agents from being transmitted to other flocks and new agents from being introduced into yours. A general resource for backyard bird health information is online at www.healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov.

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Biosecurity

Protecting Your Birds from Disease

Introduction

Biosecurity means protecting your birds by preventing disease from entering your farm, and protecting your neighbors by preventing disease from leaving your farm. Some diseases are unapparent, and others can kill all of your birds. Developing a good biosecurity plan and adhering to it is the best way to limit the introduction of infectious diseases and parasites into your flock.

Decrease Your Risks of Disease Spread

- Never introduce adult birds into an established flock unless they pass quarantine (3 to 4 weeks of isolation) or are tested clean of disease.
- Never mix different species in the same flock. Mixing species (e.g., chickens and turkeys or with waterfowl) on the same premises can be a deadly combination.
- Limit visitors from accessing your pens. Do not visit other poultry facilities.
- Confine birds to a fenced area and limit contact with wild birds, mammals, and insects as much as possible.
- Do not share equipment, supplies, or vehicles with other bird owners.
- Clean and disinfect all coops, equipment, shoes, clothes, and vehicles properly, every time, before entering poultry areas.
- Practice “all in, all out” when changing flocks. Get rid of all birds and disinfect the coop before getting any new birds.
- Keep rodents, flies, dogs, and cats out of the chicken coop and feed.
- Check for parasites monthly and treat if necessary. Use a dusting area to prevent external parasites.

Best Practices on the Farm

- Make sure everyone that cares for your birds understands and abides by all biosecurity plans for your flock.
- Wear separate dedicated clothing and shoes when working with your birds.
- Clean up any spilled feed and discourage wild birds from accessing feed and your bird pens.

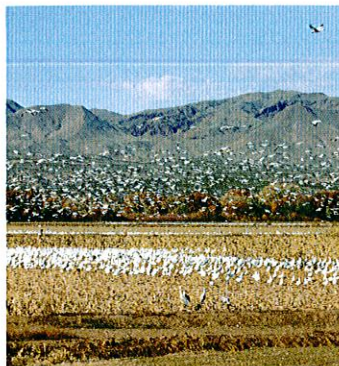


- Watch for signs of infectious disease in your birds.
- **Never** access your birds after hunting, fishing, or coming in contact with any other birds or areas that wild birds frequent.
- **Never** buy birds from unknown sources like auctions or other live bird markets.
- Care for and visit birds in the order of bird age—youngest first to oldest last.
- Always care for sick pens last or, better yet, have a separate person care for sick birds.

Signs of Sick Poultry

If birds:

- Stop eating and drinking
- Show signs of droopiness or lack of energy
- Have watery eyes or nostrils, and make rattling or wheezing sounds when they breathe
- Die suddenly without clinical signs
- Have poor balance and/or abnormal head and neck positions
- Have diarrhea
- Have decreased egg production or produce soft-shelled or misshapen eggs
- Exhibit swelling or purple discoloration of shanks, head, eyelids, or comb



What to Do If You Have Sick Birds

- Place your premises under voluntary quarantine from all visitors.
- Do not buy, sell, trade, or move any of the birds off your premises.
- As soon as possible, double-bag and refrigerate (do not freeze) dead bird(s) and contact the veterinary diagnostic laboratory for further directions on submission. You may be directed to take live birds with symptoms and/or take or ship recently deceased birds to the lab.
- Do not visit farms or businesses that are frequented by people that have birds.

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Contact Penn State Extension

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Prepared by Phillip Clauer, Mike Hulet, and Gregory Martin, Poultry Specialists, Penn State Extension and Department of Animal Science, and Patti Dunn, Avian Pathologist and Field Investigator, Animal Diagnostic Lab.

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