

BIOSECURITY: PROTECTING YOUR POULTRY

Recent Avian Influenza (AI) outbreaks in Minnesota, Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas make the disease threat much closer to the East Coast. Biosecurity is the greatest way to ensure your farm and poultry are safeguarded against disease.

Practicing biosecurity means you are doing everything to reduce the chances of infectious disease being carried onto your farm by people, animals, equipment, or vehicles. This also means you are being diligent to reduce the chance of disease leaving your farm. Healthy flocks contribute to the health of U.S. animal agriculture as a whole.



An important first step is to identify the greatest risks for introducing disease to your farm.

Greatest Risks:

1. On the farm, one of the greatest risks comes from introducing new animals onto your premise, commingling or exposing your flock to other animals. This is a common way to introduce new disease-causing organisms. As a rule of thumb, new animals should be segregated for 30 days.
2. Farm visitors pose a risk, especially if they have been on other farms with poultry or have recently been in other countries with diseases exotic to the U.S.
3. Farm equipment that has been in contact with manure can be a source of infection. Equipment should not be shared with other farms unless it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before it reaches your property.

Common Sense Biosecurity Measures You Can Follow:

Protect your birds with basic tips to prevent animal disease outbreaks:

1. **Keep Your Distance** - Restrict access to your property and poultry, or post a biosecurity sign. Have a specific area where visitors can enter. Visitors should not be allowed near poultry unless absolutely necessary, and then visitors should be wearing clean footwear (disposable boots work well) and clothes (supply for them). An area should be available for visitors to change clothes and provide shower-in, shower-out facilities if possible. Require and teach biosecurity to family, employees, and all visitors coming into, or involved with your poultry production area.
2. **Keep It Clean** - You, your staff and family should always follow biosecurity procedures for cleanliness. Wear clean clothes, scrub boots/shoes with disinfectant and wash hands thoroughly. Equipment and vehicles should be kept clean and insist all equipment and vehicles should be cleaned before entering property. Maintain programs to control birds and rodents who can carry and spread disease.
3. **Don't Haul Disease Home** - If you, your employees or family have been on other farms, or other places where there is livestock and/or poultry, clean and disinfect your vehicle tires and equipment before returning home. Always change clothes and wash hands before returning to your flock.
4. **Don't Borrow Disease From Your Neighbor - Do Not** share equipment, tools, or other supplies with your neighbors of other livestock or poultry owners. If sharing equipment, be sure to clean and disinfect before returning to your property.
5. **Look for Signs of Infectious Diseases** - Know what diseases are of concern for your flock and be on the lookout for unusual signs of behavior, severe illness and/or sudden deaths. Assess the health of your flock daily. Early detection is important to prevent the spread of

disease.

6. **Report Sick Animals** - Don't wait. Report serious or unusual animal health problems to your veterinarian, local extension office, or State or Federal Animal Health officials. USDA operates a toll-free hotline (1-866-536-7593) with veterinarians to help you.

Precautions for Free Range Poultry

Poultry producers who raise birds in outdoor, non-confinement systems should prevent contact with wild birds and wild bird droppings. Protective measures include:

1. Identify high risk areas, including wetlands along migratory flyways or other areas where wild waterfowl or shorebirds congregate, and high density poultry production areas.
2. Implement preventive measures for high-risk areas:
 1. Keep birds indoors.
 2. Restrict outside open access by maintaining outdoor enclosures covered with solid roofs and wire mesh or netted sides.
 3. Keep outdoor enclosures covered with wire mesh or netting in lower risk areas.
 4. Provide feed and water for all non-confinement-raised poultry in an indoor area. Birds should not be allowed access to surface water that could potentially transmit AI or other avian pathogens through contamination with wild bird excrement.

Look for Signs of Disease

It is important for producers to know the warning signs of diseases such as avian influenza (AI). If you know the signs, you may be able to tell if something is wrong. Early detection helps prevent the spread of disease. Look for these signs:

1. Sudden increase in bird deaths in your flock
2. Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing, and/or runny nose
3. Watery and green diarrhea
4. Lack of energy and poor appetite
5. Drop in egg production or soft or thin-shelled, misshapen eggs
6. Swelling around the eyes, neck, and head
7. Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs and legs

If you suspect your birds may have AI, don't wait - Report It! The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) has a 24-hours-a-day number you can call to report: 717-772-2852.

(Source: USDA APHIS website)