



Have questions or concerns about HPAI? Call DATCP's avian influenza response line at (608) 224-4902.

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Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) In Wisconsin: Frequently Asked Questions

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) will continue to update the following questions, in partnership with federal, state, and local partners.

Learn more about HPAI

DATCP has more information and resources available at hpa.wi.gov.

If you have additional questions, contact DATCPmediainquiries@wi.gov or [sign up to receive email updates](#) about HPAI in Wisconsin.

What is highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)?

HPAI is a highly infectious disease caused by an influenza A virus that infects domestic waterfowl and poultry, such as chickens, turkeys, quail, and pheasants, as well as wild birds such as geese and ducks. HPAI spreads quickly by direct bird-to-bird contact and can be carried by manure, tools, equipment, vehicles, clothing, and shoes. While wild birds can be infected without showing any clinical signs, mortality rates in domestic poultry can reach 90-100%.

Is this a new outbreak?

This HPAI virus was first detected in wild birds in the U.S. in South Carolina in mid-January 2022. As other states in the eastern flyway began to discover the virus among poultry flocks, DATCP began notifying Wisconsin's registered poultry owners about the situation and urging them to use enhanced biosecurity practices on their premises. Detections are higher in the fall and spring as wild birds spread the virus as they migrate to their seasonal homes. All 50 states have been affected by this outbreak.

How can I protect my poultry?

DATCP continues to encourage everyone in Wisconsin working with or around poultry to practice enhanced biosecurity measures to protect their flocks, including:

- Wash hands before and after handling poultry
 - o Restrict access to your poultry and keep away from other birds, especially wild birds
 - o Keep a designated pair of shoes to wear around your flock
 - o Clean and disinfect cages and equipment
 - o Don't share equipment or supplies with other flocks
 - o Keep new birds separate from your flock for 30 days

To learn more, review the biosecurity section of the DATCP's [HPAI in Wisconsin webpage](#) or DATCP's [Biosecurity webpage](#).

What are the clinical signs of HPAI in poultry?

- Sudden death, possibly without clinical signs
- Decrease in egg production or soft-shelled/misshapen eggs
- Nasal discharge, coughing, sneezing
- Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks
- Lack of energy and appetite
- Difficulty breathing
- Stumbling, falling
- Diarrhea

What should I do if I observe HPAI symptoms in my poultry?

To report increased mortality or signs of illness among domestic birds, follow the instructions on DATCP's [Animal Disease reporting webpage](#).

How many facilities have tested positive for HPAI in Wisconsin?

A listing of all commercial and backyard poultry detections – including the county, date, and number of birds – is updated on a regular basis at hpa.wi.gov.

Has HPAI been detected in the wild bird population?

Yes. HPAI has been detected in the wild bird population in many states, including Wisconsin. Birds can carry the disease to new areas when migrating, potentially infecting domestic poultry. Additional avian influenza detections may occur as wild birds migrate.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service conducts [wild bird surveillance](#), which serves as an early warning system for the introduction and distribution of avian influenza viruses. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also conducts wild bird surveillance in Wisconsin. For more information on avian influenza in Wisconsin wildlife, visit the DNR's Avian Influenza webpage at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/disease/Avianinfluenza>.

What should I do if I find a sick or dead wild bird?

You can [report sick or dead wildlife](#) (including birds) to the DNR by filling out the [Sick or Dead Wildlife Observation Reporting System](#) form, emailing DNRWildlifeSwitchboard@wisconsin.gov, or by calling (608) 297-0866 and leaving a message. When reporting, please include the number of animals; the species; if they were sick or dead; the specific location where you saw them, including county; and the contact details of the person reporting so that staff can return a call. Depending on the type of bird, the DNR may arrange to pick up the bird or instruct you to discard it.

As a general precaution, **avoid direct contact** with wild birds whenever possible. Avoid touching any wild birds or wildlife with your bare hands. If you must touch a dead bird, wear gloves or use an inverted plastic bag. Wash your hands with soap and water and throw away any gloves after handling or disposing of dead birds or wildlife.

How are wild bird populations monitored?

The DNR is collaborating with federal partners with continued surveillance efforts. They also conduct morbidity and mortality investigations of sick or dead birds of any species on a case-by-case basis.

Observations of sick or dead wild birds or other wildlife can be reported to the DNR through multiple routes. [More information is available on the DNR website](#).

How does avian influenza spread and is it a risk to humans?

Infected birds can shed the virus through saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. Other birds and mammals can become infected when they come in contact with these fluids, or by eating infected birds. Virus can also be spread by contaminated tools, equipment, vehicles, clothing, and shoes.

Humans can become infected through contact with infected poultry, wild birds, or other animals. The current strain of avian influenza has not been shown to spread easily person-to-person. People who have gotten sick with avian influenza have been in direct contact with infected animals.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HPAI does not present immediate public health concern for the general public, but it remains a concern for those who work closely with animals. For more information, refer to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' (DHS) [avian influenza webpage](#).

Will HPAI enter the food system?

Birds from the affected flocks will not enter the food system. HPAI does not pose a food safety risk; properly handling and cooking poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165°F kills the virus.

What happens to the birds after depopulation?

This depends on several factors, including flock size and location. For large volumes of bird carcasses, composting is the most efficient and environmentally responsible method for disposal. Compost piles are constructed in a manner that includes a thick cover of carbon (e.g., wood chips) to prevent wild bird exposure and scavengers.

Composting sites are selected in conjunction with the DNR to ensure suitable soils. Compost piles are constructed in a manner that includes building a base of a minimum of 15 inches before adding infected material. The infected material is covered with a minimum of 8 inches of clean carbon. Proper construction ensures that compost reaches temperatures that inactivate the virus.

Compost is regularly inspected by staff from affected farms, DNR, and DATCP for any evidence of leachate, odor, and disruption. Any issues noted are swiftly dealt with under the instruction of a compost subject matter expert. The full composting process takes approximately 30 days from construction of the last windrow and involves daily monitoring. DATCP has resources on composting, including resources from the University of Minnesota, Iowa State University, and Cornell University, on the [Livestock Carcass Disposal webpage](#).

What happens on a compost site?

Material is laid out in windrows, which are long piles of composting material. Each windrow includes a mixture of carbon (mostly woody/mulch materials) under, around, and on top of infected material to create the appropriate environment for effective composting. The carbon layer helps generate higher temperatures and also speeds decomposition and absorbs odors.

For more information, refer to DATCP's [Livestock Carcass Disposal webpage](#).

Why is composting selected over other disposal methods?

DATCP's response plan follows USDA protocols, which calls for composting poultry mortalities of this scale. In Wisconsin, composting is often the safest and most effective way to manage the disposal and virus inactivation of large volumes of carcasses and other organic infected material. Although some materials will go to landfills, landfills can generally only accept a limited amount of carcass material and often cannot

accept other infected material. Rendering, burial, incineration, and landfilling may be used for some aspects of disposal.

What is the risk of getting bird flu (avian influenza) from groundwater?

The risk of being infected with the virus that causes HPAI from groundwater is extremely low. There has never been a documented outbreak of HPAI from infected groundwater, and there has been no evidence of live viruses capable of infecting humans or animals.

Composting rapidly deactivates the virus that causes HPAI and other pathogens when target temperatures are reached within the compost piles. Additionally, safety standards for composting sites are designed to prevent contamination of groundwater with the virus that causes HPAI and other byproducts of the composting process. These safety measures include proper construction of compost windrows to minimize the generation of liquids, and ensuring adequate distances are maintained from the compost site to well-water supplies, residences, and other bodies of water. Review the [Environmental Protection Agency's pandemic influenza fact sheet for water](#) and the [CDC prevention and transmission of bird flu](#) webpage for more information.

If your water comes from a private well and you suspect there is [a problem with your water](#) or are concerned about contamination, you can [have your water tested](#) for contaminants like bacteria, nitrates, and arsenic. Although routine testing will not detect influenza viruses, the presence of bacteria should be addressed with appropriate action to treat or disinfect your well. You can find a list of certified labs that perform well water testing on the [DNR website](#).

Additional resources:

- [DNR: Information for private well owners](#)
- [DHS: Testing recommendations for private well owners](#)

How is HPAI monitored near an infected farm?

Infected premises are not allowed to move poultry to prevent spread of the disease. Poultry premises [within 10 kilometers](#) (6.1 miles) of the farm are quarantined and monitored for signs of illness. Poultry premises, including backyards, are notified through the premises registration system. Premises registration is required for any location in Wisconsin where livestock, including poultry, are kept. Premises registration ensures poultry owners receive the most current email alerts about diseases of concern, such as HPAI, from DATCP's Division of Animal Health. To register your premises, or to ensure your contact information is current and up to date, please contact the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium (WLIC) at www.wiid.org/premises-registration-renewal or call 1-888-808-1910.

What happens if a farm is within the 10K quarantine? Can they, or how do they, move poultry, eggs, etc.?

When HPAI is diagnosed in a Wisconsin flock, a Control Area is established within a 10-kilometer area around the infected premises, restricting movement on or off any premises with poultry. Premises with poultry within a Control Area are placed under an area quarantine. You may not move domestic birds or poultry products on or off your premises until notified that the Control Area has been released by the State Veterinarian. Backyard producers are also restricted from moving poultry or eggs.

Registered poultry premises will receive an email or other written notification and further information. If the map indicates your poultry premises is within 10 kilometers of an infected premises, but you did not receive a quarantine order by email or mail, please contact DATCP's Division of Animal Health at (608) 224-4872. All poultry producers in the Control Area must comply with stringent biosecurity and permitting protocols. For movement permits from quarantined premises in Control Areas, email

DATCPAnimalImports@wi.gov or call (608) 224-4874. To view active control zones in Wisconsin, refer to DATCP's [HPAI Map](#). You can also check the map to verify if the zone has been lifted.

How can I find out if there are any infected farms near me?

A map of current HPAI Control Areas and Surveillance Zones in Wisconsin is available [at this link](#).

For more information about these zones, including if you're impacted, [review this resource](#).

What about dairy cattle?

In 2024, HPAI was detected in dairy cattle in the southern U.S. and has since been [detected in several states](#). There have been no cases of HPAI in dairy cattle in Wisconsin. Since June 2025, Wisconsin has been regularly conducting robust surveillance testing as part of the National Milk Testing Strategy (NMTS). The influenza A (H5N1) virus that causes HPAI has not been detected in any of the PCR samples. These tests represent nearly all licensed dairies in Wisconsin, with remaining verifications underway to ensure complete statewide reach. Dairy producers should continue to practice good biosecurity through fall migration especially. For more information about DATCP's prevention efforts in dairy cattle or Wisconsin's participation in NMTS: [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(H5N1\) in Dairy Cattle](#).