

Avian Flu Poultry Workers

Avian flu is a viral disease and it can be very contagious and even deadly in poultry (e.g., chickens, turkeys, ducks). Of great concern are the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) viruses (e.g., H5N1, H7N9) that have killed millions of birds and have infected humans in other countries. If avian flu viruses are detected in the U.S., take appropriate precautions.

Signs of Avian Flu Illness in Birds

Sudden death; lack of energy, appetite, and coordination; purple discoloration and/or swelling of various body parts; diarrhea; nasal discharge; coughing; sneezing; and reduced egg production and/or soft-shelled or misshapen eggs.

Avian Flu Symptoms in Humans

Range from fever, cough, sore throat and muscle aches to nausea, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, eye infections, difficulty breathing, pneumonia and severe respiratory disease. Symptoms may depend on which virus caused the infection but are often similar to those of human seasonal influenza.

When Engaged in Depopulation Activities

- Wash hands thoroughly (for at least 15 seconds) and frequently, preferably with soap and water (or an alcohol-based hand rub, if soap and water are not available).
- Wear lightweight, disposable gloves or heavy-duty rubber work gloves that can be disinfected. Avoid touching your face with gloved hands. Wash hands after removing gloves and other personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Wear disposable outer garments, coveralls or surgical gowns with long, cuffed sleeves and with a sealed apron.
- Wear disposable shoe covers or boots that can be cleaned and disinfected.
- Wear safety goggles and disposable head or hair cover.
- Wear at least the minimum level of respiratory protection, an N95 or higher respirator.
- Avoid eating, drinking, smoking and bathroom use while wearing PPE.

Additional Guidance

- Get the seasonal flu vaccine.
- Have your healthcare provider prescribe an adequate supply of antivirals to take during poultry destruction activities and for five days after it ends.
- If you develop flu-like symptoms, stay at home except to get medical attention.

For more information:



U.S. Department of Labor



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